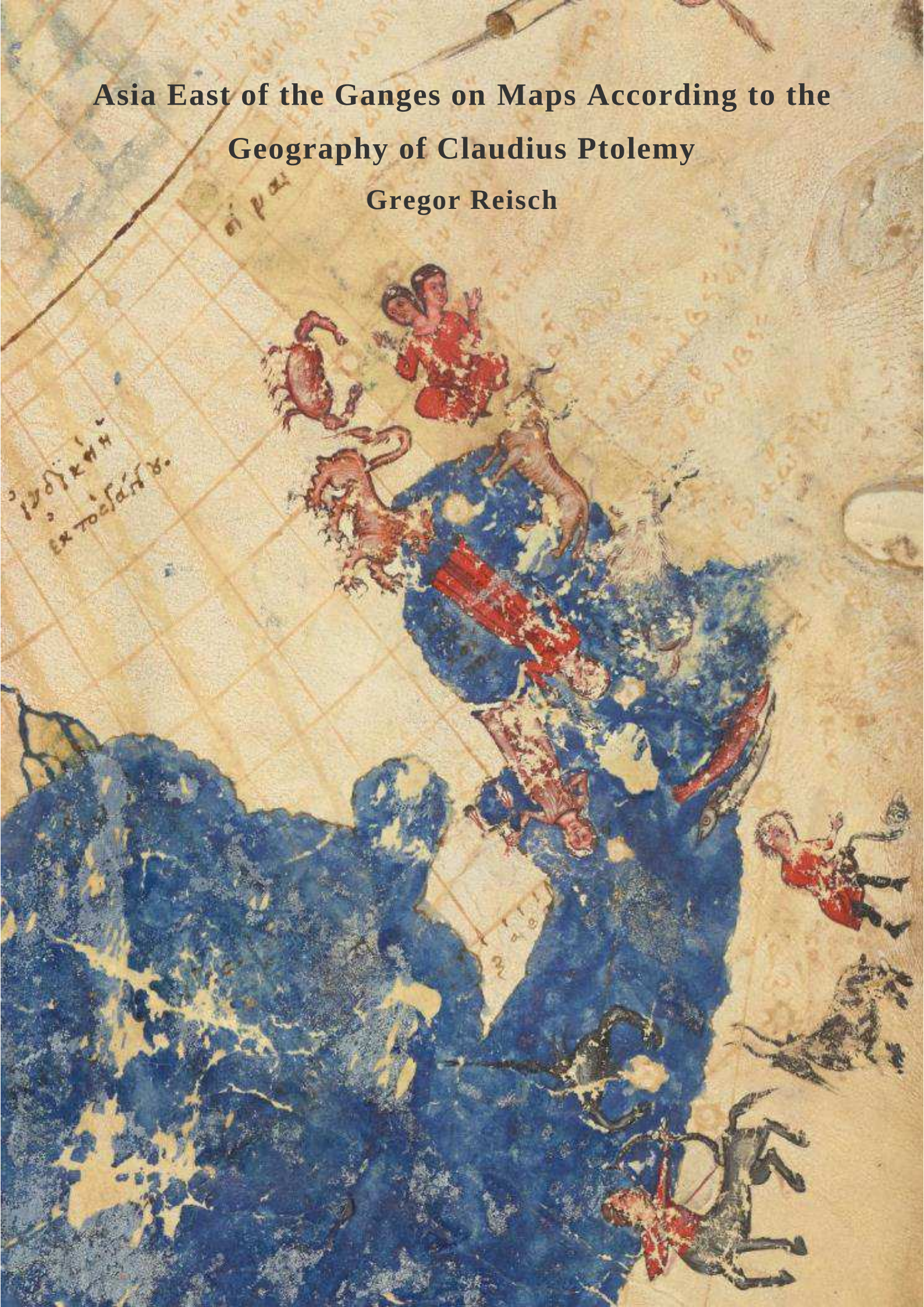


**Asia East of the Ganges on Maps According to the
Geography of Claudius Ptolemy**

Gregor Reisch



Asia East of the Ganges on Maps According to the Geography of Claudius

Gregor Reisch

Cover art: Detail of folio 106 right from the Manuscript Burney MS 111 (British Library).
Depicted are the zodiac signs, placed in the so-called „Great Gulf“

Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	The Region beyond the Ganges	3
	Southern Argyre	5
	The Golden Khersones	14
	The Estuary of Several Rivers with the Perimoulkos Gulf	18
	The Daona River	23
	The Doruis River	30
	The Seros River	33
3	The Country of the Sinai	37
	The Aspitharas River	37
	The Ambastos River	39
	The Kouthiaris River	42
	The Kathigara Berth	45
	The Iabadiu Island	47
4	Conclusion	50
	Maps	51
	Bibliography	51

Asia East of the Ganges on Maps According to the Geography of Claudius Ptolemy

Gregor Reisch

1 Introduction

Through my experience in the analysis of drawn late medieval maps of Taprobane, I have learned to take these early works of cartography seriously and not to dismiss them as pure imagination products of craftsmen.

In the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, the interest of educated people in facts increased in Europe. Merchants and rulers needed more reliable maps for journeys and conquests. Before the times of discoveries and conquests, one was content with existing rough representations of the land masses, which one regarded as truthful despite remarkable schematization. This research paper is intended to show, that at least a few late medieval maps, which are based on the data of the ancient cartographer Klaudios Ptolemaios, and are depicting the region of India beyond the Ganges, in fact mainly and quite truthfully represent the territory of present-day Myanmar. The current state of my research can not conclusively, and should not necessarily, provide identifications for each named locality from Ptolemy's lists.

Areas by the sea were and are subject to changes over the centuries. The same applies to human settlements, that may have once existed and were later abandoned or simply renamed. First and foremost, for this survey, cornerstones in the given geographical representation should be set. As in ground archaeology, it was necessary to stake out a limited area of investigation. The purpose of such markings here is to enable experts from the various fields of history, archaeology and linguistics related to Myanmar, former Burma, to gain new insights and perhaps even assessments.

For centuries, the nautical achievements of ancient Western mariners were overestimated to the extent, that they have been believed to have reached China's coasts. In fact, until the 2nd century CE, only the coasts up to the Mergui archipelago will have been known to them. As a traveller, the informant Alexandros mentioned by Ptolemy should be named here in particular. The maps from the manuscript Burney MS 111 and by Nikolaus Germanicus provide sufficient evidence for the thesis, as to how this investigation is intended to show. Moreover, it is only shortly after the time of Klaudios Ptolemaios that Romans are reported to have come further as Mergui. As Borell, Bellina and Chaisuwan wrote, a so-called embassy of Andun, that means Emperor Antoninus, is recorded to the Chinese court for October 166 CE. Like others, Borell quite rightly assumes, that these envoys were actually a group of merchants, who had acquired the presented "tribute" on their way along the maritime routes. And that they might have travelled on board of foreign ships from the eastern coast of India, reaching the western coast of the Thai-Malay Peninsula¹.

Already in 1797, a South German history professor named Konrad Mannert accepted the premise of the substantial significance of Indians for Ptolemy's Geography as a fact. He stated that stories of Indian merchants about the areas east of the Ganges were reflected in this ancient book, whereas

¹Borell, p. 111.

Greek travellers first gathered their own experiences at the Ganges River².

In fact, sea trade in the region of present-day Myanmar was probably mainly dominated in antiquity by ships and crew of Indian origin. The frequent occurrence of the name component *nagara*, being the Sanskrit word for town, in Ptolemy's town names already indicates this. The so-called Pyū millennium in today's Myanmar, which lasted from the 2nd century BC to the 9th century CE, was heavily influenced by Indian culture and religion³. Several Indic loanwords are known to have found their way into the Pyū language⁴. In fact, travellers from the West may have perceived this region as belonging culturally to India. As far as we know today, there are some elements of truth to this perception. Therefore, it is not surprising that Ptolemaios himself saw the region as part of India, albeit east of the Ganges, and thus somehow an area of its own.

East of the Pyū territory and areas of dominion East Asian seafarers and traders are more likely to have taken over the onward transport of goods to China, at least in the first centuries of the millennium⁵. In such a way, a kind of veil of ignorance about these more distant regions might have spread for western eyes. So far Claudius Ptolemy in Egyptian Alexandria could not see in his mind's eye, just because of the lack of information.

The information that the Greek-speaking scholar was able to obtain about the Far East, working himself in Roman Egypt, can be seen in his texts and on the drawn maps that are based on his texts. In the 16th century, however, some scholars and cartographers in the West will have been aware that the descriptions by Ptolemy and the old maps according to them did not include Malaysia and China at all. This can be clearly inferred from a book edition of the Ptolemy Atlas from 1541. Its original editor Laurent Fries from the Alsace Region had added three more to the existing maps, representing regions east of those named by Ptolemy⁶. On the first additional map, titled *Tabula noua Indiae orientalis & meridionalis*, the Malay Peninsula with Sumatra and Java were depicted. On the second one in the same style, titled *Tabula Superioris Indiae & Tartariae maioris*, followed China and Japan⁷.

²Mannert, p. 260. Pages 260 to 275 of Mannert's fifth book on the geography of the Greeks and Romans deal with the areas east of the Ganges and the land of the Sina according to Ptolemy's descriptions. His books were generally characterized by a thorough study of textual and map sources.

³For a comprehensive list of the various imported cultural elements, particularly from India, see Griffiths, page 46.

⁴Examples of this use in "Studies in Pyu Epigraphy" by Griffiths and others.

⁵See also Borell's article on this topic.

⁶After Laurent Fries' death in 1531 or 1532, Michael Servetus was responsible for the last two book editions printed by Gaspar Trechsel in Vienne, France.

⁷The third map displays the new world, America. See the scalable maps presented by Götzfried Antique Maps (online address in the maps appendix).

2 The Region beyond the Ganges



Fig. 1: Map by Nicolaus Germanus showing India beyond the Ganges (National Library of Poland, 2018)



Fig. 2: Detail of a map of the Eastern Hemisphere as seen 50 CE (Thomas A. Lessman, 2008)

The map section of the map representation of Southeast Asia by Lessmann from 2008 shown here (Fig. 2), corresponds in a special way to the discussed medieval maps of the region of India beyond the Ganges (Fig. 1), also known as Further India. This may in particular apply for the borderline between the Pyu City-States, the Thai-Tribes and the country called Thaton on Lessmann's map. This axis can also be found on the maps according to Ptolemy, as a border line to the Sina region. This dividing line roughly corresponds with the current language border of the Sino-Tibetan to the Tai-Kadai language family, which today runs within the territory of Myanmar, from its north-east to its south-east.

After reading Aung-Thwin's book "The Mists of Rāmañña", however, the existence of a so-called country of Thaton at the time about 50 CE, depicted on Lessmann's map, seems to be more than a doubtful presumption. After all, Aung-Thwin explained in great detail that the existence of a kingdom of Thaton in ancient times was most probably a very late myth of a few influential people. These chroniclers, colonial officials and scholars certainly believed themselves that there had existed a sophisticated, famous and superior Mon Empire of Thaton in antiquity. The state and urban structures of the coastal region around Thaton for the time before 1000 CE, actually lie in the mists of facts and fiction. As Aung-Thwin convincingly explained it in his own words, is Thaton not mentioned in indigenous original sources until the third quarter of the 15th century CE. It has thus to be a late projection backwards. So, the (presumably always insignificant) city of Thaton only became historically tangible in the late Middle Ages. Aung Thwin noted in his book "[...] there is no evidence for either a Rāmaññadesa or Thatôn as early as Aniruddha's reign [...]"⁸ and "There is no evidence that Indianization of the Pyū and Burmese cultures had anything at all to do with the Mon and certainly not with the nonexistent Rāmaññadesa."⁹ According to conventional opinion, Thaton is said to have been the capital of a country called Rāmaññadesa already in antiquity.

As Aung-Thwin was also able to show in his book, the modern archaeology of recent decades in Myanmar, particularly with methods of radiocarbon dating and thermoluminescence, has made it clear that the idea that Thaton was the cradle of native culture, is a scientific aberration. The few experts in the history and culture of former Burma, today Myanmar, have unfortunately been too willing barking up the wrong tree in their writings.

After the study of the old maps and place names according to Ptolemaios of Alexandria, a more differentiated picture emerges, as in archaeology.

The medieval maps of the large region under consideration here are probably based on some ancient representations. This study is intended to help shed more light on the history of Myanmar before the Middle Ages with the help of these truly ancient data.

⁸Aung-Thwin, p. 104.

⁹Aung-Thwin, p. 303.

Southern Argyre

Regarding our knowledge of the history of the mountainous area of Arakan till the 4th century CE, it is a golden screen of collected myths, behind which it is difficult to verify reliable historical facts. Therefore, the maps of the geography of Ptolemy certainly provide a more reliable basis for classifying ancient settlements and their names geographically and linguistically. Most modern authors, including Gerini, to name just one of them, have already identified the so-called Argyre with Arakan.



Fig. 3 (top left): Basakata Island (British Museum)



Fig. 4 (top): Cheduba Island (U.S. Army Map Service, NE 46-7 "Sandoway")

The island of Cheduba off the coast of Arakan (Fig. 4) may have been a striking landmark in ancient times, which was used on the sea route when coming from India and sailing to the east. Especially the coastline in the form of star-shaped serrations in its northern part is so peculiar that it had to stand out. The name of the island in Ptolemy's text shows a reversal of the name components *Chedu* and *ba* to *ba(sa)* and *kata*.

Bazakata (Fig. 3) is mistakenly identified in Stückelberger's edition as Ramree Island and instead the distant island Chaline (Saline) as Cheduba¹⁰. Regarding Bazakata, however, neither the form on the map nor the name of the Island corresponds to Ramree. These things are very different regarding the Cheduba Island. If you rotate the outline sketch of Bazakata clockwise, it will be nearly congruent with the outlines of Cheduba (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5 (top): View of the Cheduba Island (MapQuest, OpenStreetMap and Mapbox 2018) overlaid by the rotated outlines of the Basakata Island (British Museum)

The map representation allows the conclusion that the island was approached from the north. In the

¹⁰Ptolemaios, 2. Teilband, p. 729.

case of coastal shipping and coming from India, the first thing that would have been sighted would have been the north side of the Cheduba island. Since Greek is written from left to right, in this image too, the left is considered to be first, that is to say, seen first.

Incidentally, the island of Cheduba lies on the same latitude as the ancient city of Sri Ksetra on the Irrawaddy. Today the Toungup (Taungup) Road runs between the mainland coast, opposite to the island Cheduba, with the principal town Toungup at the coast and the fallen ancient royal city of Sri Ksetra, following the Toungup River. This is an access road from the Irrawaddy River to the Bay of Bengal, which the Pyu people may have already used in ancient times. In any case, the discovery of a coin in Taungup Township dated to the first-millennium is known to us¹¹.



Fig. 6 (top left): Sada city, lying south of the Sados River with the emporium Berabonna farther south at the coast (British Museum)



Fig. 7 (top right): The Thandwe/Sandoway district, south of the Sandoway Chaung (River) and the town Gyeiktaw farther south at the coast (Google Maps 2018)

The headland of Zalataung, which lies south of the estuary of the Sandoway River, was obviously particularly well depicted by the draughtsman of the ancient map (Fig. 6).

Thandwe (Fig. 7) is the Arakanian version of the town's name, which became known as Sandoway

¹¹See the map Fig. 2 in Griffiths, p. 48.

during the British colonial period. The fact that an old form of the native town name Thandwe could become the name Sada in ancient Greek is probably also due to its pronunciation by the locals. The Burmese pronunciation is [θàndwé], hence the colonial name Sandoway.



Fig. 8: Sada city, lying south of the Sados River with the emporium Berabona farther south at the coast (National Library of Poland)

As McCrindle wrote at the end of the 19th century, (Francis) Wilford had already proposed at the beginning of the 19th century to identify Sandowe with Sada.¹² Gerini was at first a little more reserved in his book from 1909 and wrote: “One thing is certain, however, and this is that Sada corresponds to Sandoway.”¹³ Eventually, however, he realized: “In the early Portugese maps Sandoway is noted as Ledda, Ledoa, Sedoa. The latter form appears also in João de Barros, lib. ix, ch. i. This shows it beyond doubt to be Ptolemy’s Sada.”¹⁴

A legend tells of the conquest of Thandwe in mythical times by a prince named Vasudeva. The city is said to have appeared in the form of a great bird to defend itself, but was finally overpowered and killed: “A ravine near the Civil Station known as the *Thwe-gyaung* ist pointed out as having been formed by the rush of blood from the severed neck of the dying bird.”¹⁵ If one interprets this story in a figurative sense, the so-called “bird” could have been a kind of heraldic animal of the city of Thandwe or the local dynasty that fell on a nearby battlefield. Considering that ancient Rome, for example, was symbolized militarily by an eagle, this is not an unlikely assumption. In today's ruined city of Sri Ksetra, one tangible evidence was also found to confirm the assumption that a similar tradition existed in the Pyu dominion. This information is present in the form of a sandstone re-

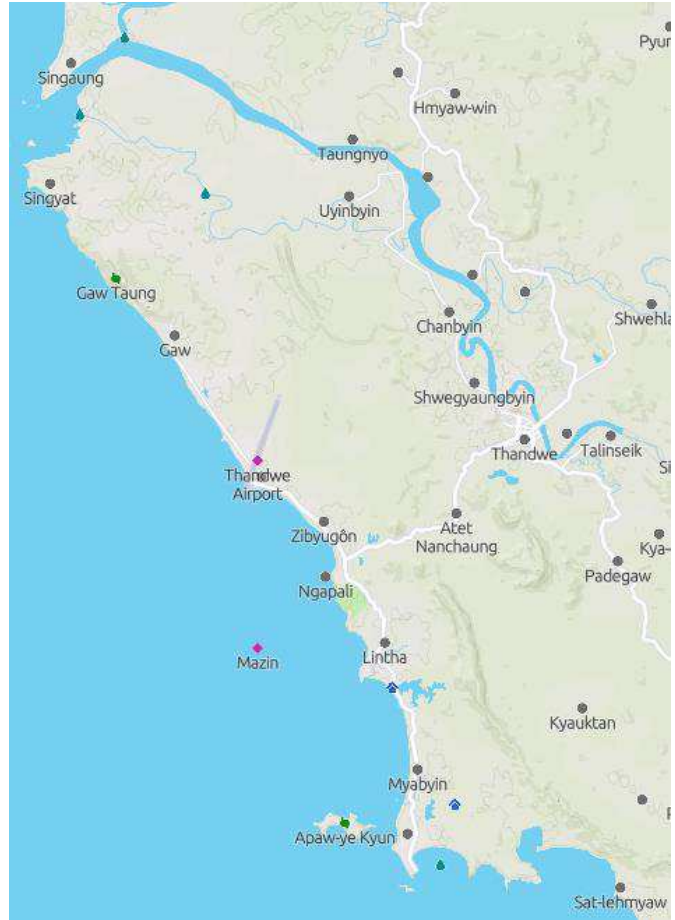


Fig. 9: The Region of Thandwe with Myabyin (Mapbox and Mapcarta 2018)

¹²McCrindle, p. 197. At the end of his life, Wilford was comparing geographical texts in Sanskrit with the corpus of classical Greek and Latin literature. His work was finally published 1822 in Calcutta, as “On the Ancient Geography of India” on the pages 373-478 of *Asiatick Researches*.

¹³Gerini, p. 45.

¹⁴Gerini, p. 46.

¹⁵Tydd, p. 9.

lief, which, by stylistic comparison, can be dated to the 1st or 2nd century CE.¹⁶ The stele represents a kind of warrior-ruler on one side, next to which a standard bearer, holding a *garuḍadhvaja* stands. According to Indian tradition, this standard can be recognized as an emblem of the ruling dynasty. Here, this eagle-like heraldic animal of a *garuḍa* was depicted only as beaked bird head.¹⁷ It is even possible to establish a link between the warrior-king figure shown to the Indic Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa deity and its association with kingship.¹⁸ Tellingly, the stele was found in the geographical centre of Sri Ksetra, near the northern wall of the palace.¹⁹ Through the Burmese Glass Palace Chronicle we also learn that at the time of the Pyū in the 2nd century CE a „great bird“, living in the west of the city of Bagan, oppressed the Irrawaddy kingdom: “[...] in the west quarter there is a great bird followed by five hundred [...] To the great bird he must give seven maidens once a week [...] Thence went he to the west where the great bird was. [...] But the prince [Pyusawhti] was not afraid, for he was of nature cool and steadfast, but he spake aloud and uttered words of challenge, and he pierced and slew the mighty bird with the arrow barbed with Sakra's thunderbolt. [...] and the place where the great bird was shot is still known as Hngeppyittaung.”²⁰

Script of the Pyū people was not only found along the Irrawaddy River, but also in Thandway, and thus in southern Arakan²¹. This points to the early influence of the Pyū culture in the southern territory of Arakan, which at that time was still rather wild. According to the Glass Palace Chronicle, the hilly region of Thandwe was inhabited by the ethnic group of the so-called Kanyan in the early Pyu period.²² The Pyu themselves were called P'iao by the Chinese. Gerini noted the following about the name variant Sāntvai for Sandoway: “I identified it with the country of San-t'o mentioned by Chinese authors among the eighteen kingdoms tributary to P'iao (see Hervey de St. Denis, loc. Cit.).”²³

The anthropologist Celine Coderey reported the following about the language in Arakan after her fieldwork in the Thandwe area between 2004 and 2009:

While the language spoken in the northern part of the state is very different from the Burmese of Yangon, the one spoken in the Thandwe area is almost identical to it. More generally, even though Thandwe is part of the Arakan state and the villagers feel Arakanese, there is a strong Burmese influence in the area.²⁴

As far as can be concluded by its position on the map from Burney MS 111 (Fig. 6), the coastal town of Berabonna, called an emporium by Ptolemy, was probably a predecessor settlement of a place near today's fishing village Myabyin (Fig. 9). The syllable *bon* in the place name Berabona

¹⁶See Gutman and Hudson p. 25.

¹⁷Guy, p. 89. John Guy was the first to analyse the stele in his article adequately (Guy, 1997). Pamela Gutman and Bob Hudson, however, provide the most up-to-date and comprehensive analysis in their article (Gutman and Hudson, 2012).

¹⁸Gutman and Hudson pp. 25/26. They reasoned, that with such a representation a king identified himself with the deity. Also mentioned in this context is the Heliodorus inscription at Sanchi. In the inscription, this Greek ambassador of Taxila of the 2nd century BC recorded the erection of a garuḍadhvaja as the banner of Vasudeva and thus as his emblem (Gutmann and Hudson pp. 26/28).

¹⁹Gutman and Hudson p. 22.

²⁰Translation by Tin and Luce, pp. 31-33. In conclusion, it was tried to verify the truthfulness of this story by the following statement in the Chronicle: “But all four enemies—the great bird, the great boar, the great tiger, and the flying squirrel—are mentioned not only in the Great Chronicle but also explicitly in others too, such as the Pagan Chronicle and the Old Pagan Thamaing. Hlawgathonhtaunghmu, it should be noted, has written in his *kabya* only the plain truth.”

²¹Aung-Thwin, p. 170. On the hill Hpayataung/Phaya Taung near Tondaw village, 50 km from Sandoway, a stone menhir was found with a Pyu inscription, catalogued as “PYU 23” (Griffiths, p. 160 and Miles, Miyake and Hill, pp. 6-9).

²²Translation by Tin and Luce, p. 12.

²³Gerini, p. 46.

²⁴Coderey, p. 165.

(Fig. 8) is nowadays also found a little further south in the names of small coastal towns like Kinbon and Kolanbon²⁵. The nice little market on the main street of the southern neighbour village of Myabyin called Gyeiktaw, which lies at the Andrew Bay, is currently known even by European tourists who like to take a morning walk²⁶. The coastal stretch including the northern beach of Ngapali has been an attraction for western tourists for years. The idea that there has been little change in the relationship with visitors in this area for two thousand years is indeed fascinating.



Fig. 10 (top): Temala promontory (National Library of Poland), rotated by about 180 degrees

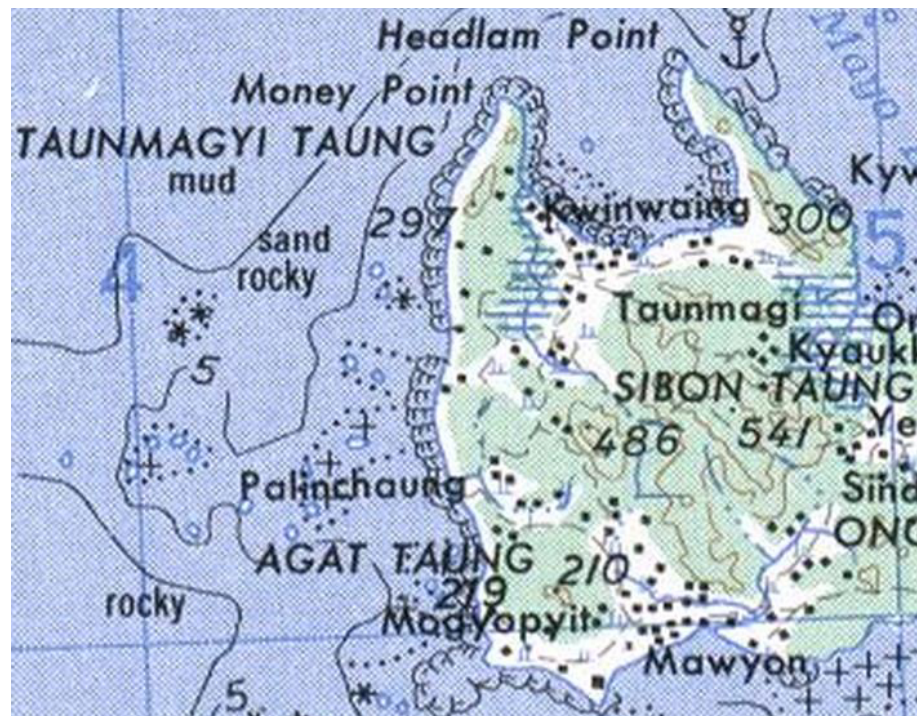


Fig. 11 (right): Taunmagyi Taung and Sibon Taung (U.S. Army Map Service, NE 46-7 "Sandoway")



Fig. 12 (top): Temala promontory with coastal town Sabara (British Museum), rotated by about 180 degrees.

The Temala Promontory (Fig. 10) probably describes the Taunmagyi Taung, the Taunmagyi mountain, with the so-called "Money Point" (Fig. 11). The "Prostar Sailing Directions 2005 India & Bay of Bengal Enroute" writes about this place:

A large promontory, with Money Point as its NW extremity, extends about 5 miles W from the general line of the coast close S of Andrew Bay. Mawyon Pagoda, conspicuous from seaward when the sun shines on it, stands on the SW part of this promontory.

Dangerous foul ground, marked by numerous above and below-water rocks, fronts the W side of the promontory up to 3.5 miles offshore. A detached drying rocky patch lies about 4.3 miles WSW of Money Point and is the outermost danger. A drying rock lies about 1.3 miles S of the SW extremity of the promontory; a foul patch lies about 1.5 miles SE of the same extremity. (NGIA, p. 172)

So, this promontory is a dangerous location for sailing ships, where they surely had to be cautious already in antiquity.

²⁵See the U.S. Army Map Service map NE46-12 "Henzada".

²⁶See pages 219 and 220 (map) from the book *DuMont Reisehandbuch Myanmar* by the travel journalist Petrich (2016).

When comparing the map view of the coastline at Money Point with that of the maps from the manuscripts (Fig. 10 and 12), the reversal of north and south is particularly noticeable. The way in which the coastal area south of Gyeiktaw to Gwa is depicted, with the cardinal points reversed, can have several reasons. The first possible cause may have been the disclosures given by the mapper's informant. Perhaps he simply could not say with certainty, whether the point of Temala Promontory was lying in its north or south. Due to the strong fissure of the coast and a large number of small bays in this area, what made navigation and orientation difficult, some confusion could certainly have happened. Another possible cause for the reversal of compass directions can be seen when examining the Besynga River, a river that will be talked about more subsequently. After comparing the ancient maps with the modern ones, it is possible to realise a reversal of the course of the river from north to south instead of east to west in the graphical representations. Copyists of the ancient map in the Middle Ages may have faced a practical problem, which led to the depiction known today. The map representation of the course of the river will originally have been done on papyrus scrolls by the Roman-Greeks from Egypt. With a scroll, the possible writeable length was theoretically infinite by sticking further leaves together. This can be seen very well when looking at the format of the preserved Roman road map *Tabula Peutingeriana*. When depicting a map, the medieval scribe usually had to limit himself to two opposite pages in a bound book. Drawing and captions had to fit on these double pages. On the maps from the manuscript Burney MS 111, letters of place names were therefore written on top of each other. Regarding cardinal directions or coastline lengths, the copyist may also have made concessions out of space constraints, while preserving the forms of coastlines and river bends. By rotating individual image sections and shortening of coastlines, it was possible, for example, to shorten the width of the entire drawing. Assuming the existence of original drawings of Ptolemy's maps on (papyrus) scrolls, one would also have a logical explanation for the strange compressed representation of India. Actually, the images of the Indian subcontinent following Ptolemy's description were therefore unrealistically depicted in bound books. This is also a hint to an adopted representation of India from a narrow but long scroll, comparable to that of the *Tabula Peutingeriana*.

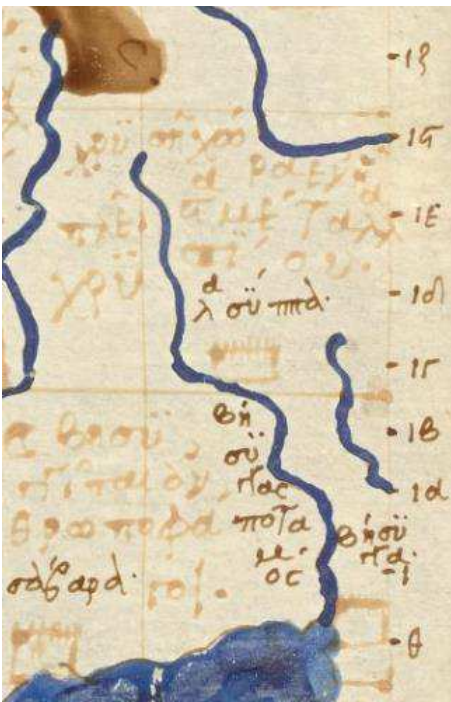


Fig. 13: The Besyngas River with the emporium Besynga at its mouth and the settlement Lasypa at its upper reaches (British Museum)

The Besyngytai are called man-eaters by Ptolemaios²⁷. This fits well to the assumed origin of the designation Arakan, which is the province of Rakhine today. It is assumed that it comes from the middle Indian word Rakkha, which in ancient times was used to describe man-eating ogres. In world history, however, traditional cannibalism among humans was rather an exception. On the other hand, individual tigers, for example in the Sunderbans in the Bay of Bengal, may have developed more frequently into man-eaters. This is mainly due to the increasing settlement of forested areas by people and thus a restriction of the habitat of the big cats. Interestingly, today there are some extensive Reserved Forest areas east of the Gwa Chaung (Fig. 14), summarized under the term "Rakhine Yoma Wildlife Reservation".

²⁷Ptolemaios, 2. Teilband, 7.2.4.

Already in the 50's, there were Reserved Forest areas existing here. In the Rakhine Yoma Wildlife area, elephants and smaller predatory cats live today as wild animals. It is said, that in old times also tigers were living in these jungles. So Possibly, some tigers were here already in antiquity the actual man-eaters.²⁸ If men happened to encounter such tigers in the jungle, this was probably the last what they got to see in their lives. Therefore, narratives about man-eaters were more likely to be speculations about the perpetrators of torn corpses, every time rib cages of men were found in the jungle. Even today, tigers live hidden in forests in such a way that in Myanmar, for example, often only camera traps can confirm their existence at all.



Fig. 14: The town Gwa at the coast and the large Rakhine Yoma Wildlife reserve near the upper Gwa River (Google Maps 2018). The village Tingyin with the nearby village of Leze in detail view (U.S. Army Map Service, NE 46-12)

One can assume, that already in the Pyu millennium the forest areas of Arakan were exposed to a stronger colonization, thereby increasing the number of deadly encounters with tigers. Over time, especially the inhabitants of southern Arakan may have gained the reputation to come from a region of man-eaters. There is a legend that the legendary founder of the city of Bagan in the 2nd century

²⁸See on this topic: Nyhus, P. J.; Dufraine, C. E.; Ambrogi, M. C.; Hart, S. E.; Carroll, C.; Tilson, R. (2010). "Human-tiger conflict over time". In Tilson, R.; Nyhus, P. J. *Tigers of the world: The science, politics, and conservation of Panthera tigris* (2nd ed.). Burlington, Massachusetts: Academic Press. pp. 132–135.

CE, named Thamoddarit, could not conquer a great enemy called “great Tiger”, who was “followed by five hundred” in the “south quarter”.²⁹ The later heir of this king, a hero named Pyusawhti, finally managed to defeat this terrible enemy, what, according to Burmese historiography, happened in the first half of the 2nd century CE. As solid evidence for the considerable symbolic value of the tiger as a powerful and furious animal in ancient Myanmar, the finds of about three hundred small carnelian tiger beads or pendants, attributed to the culture of the Pyu, may serve.³⁰

The village of Lasypa in Ptolemy’s text is situated on the ancient maps at the lower reaches of the Besyngas River (Fig. 13). It could have been the Greek name of today's small village of Leza, which is nearby the more important village of Tingyin (Fig. 14)



Fig. 15 (top left): Coastline between Besynga and Berobai (British Museum)

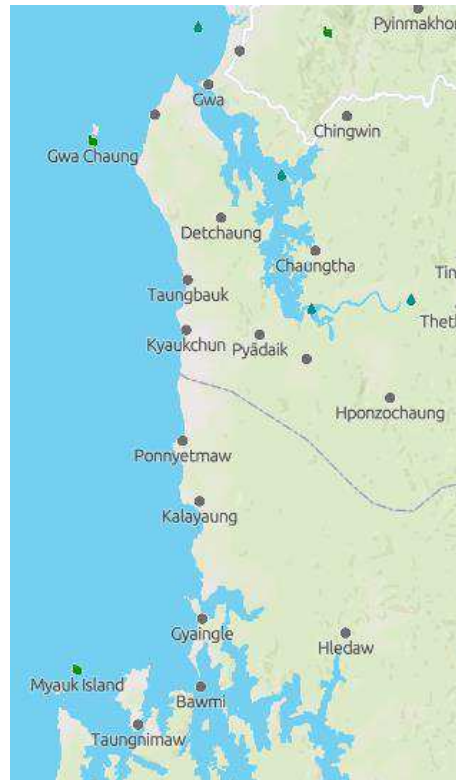
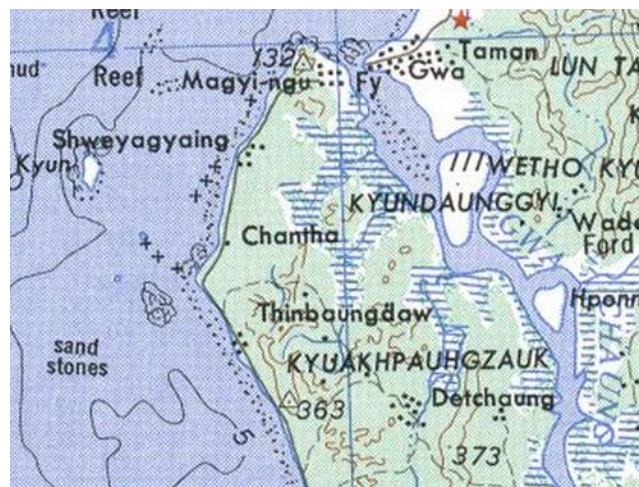


Fig. 16 (top right): Coastline between Gwa und Bawmi (Mapbox and Mapcarta 2018)

Fig. 17 (right): The coastal village of Thinbaungdaw, south-west of the town Gwa and the Gwa Chaung (U.S. Army Map Service, NE 46-12 “Henzada”)



²⁹Glass Palace chronicle, translated by Tin and Luce, page 31.

³⁰About the assumed origin and meaning of the beads see also the passage “Carnelian tiger beads and a China connection” in Hudson’s *The Origins of Bagan*, pp. 84-85.

McCrindle had presumed in the 19th century, that the name Besynga for a mart at the coast, had actually meant the city of Bassein³¹. However, on the basis of the map representation from Burney MS 111, Bassein/Pathein is going to be identified with another more likely town later in this study. The coastal marketplace Besynga probably refers to today's fishing village Thinbaungdaw (Fig. 17), opposite today's small-town Gwa. Like Besynga on the map according to Ptolemaios, Thinbaungdaw is located south of a river, here the Gwa River, and on one side of a somehow triangular headland. Hearing the local name of the mart, foreigners from the West will, unfortunately, have orally understood something like "Synbengda". At the latest when Ptolemy wrote down the name in Alexandria in a Greek type, it was simply called Besynga and eventually passed down to us in this form. The fishing village Thinbaungdaw, like Gwa itself, is located in the south of the Gwa township in Myanmar and belongs to the Thandwe district. Nowadays, Thinbaungdaw does not have its own general market, only a tea shop³². In contrast, one of the few offers to spend the time for today's tourists in Gwa is to visit the market in Gwa, with its local products as foods, in the morning. The Sailing Directions tells us, that "During the Northeast Monsoon, vessels occasionally call at the village of Gwa on the E side of the entrance of the river on the S side of the bay. The coast between Gwa Bay and Broken Point, about 42 miles SSW, is indented by several small bays which provide anchorage in good weather. During the Southwest Monsoon, little shelter is provided except in Danson Bay."³³ Seafarers of antiquity will certainly have known and used these climatic features in the yearly cycle of the coastal region of Gwa. In the southern part of Rakhine is Gwa the last town and lies close to the border of the Ayarwaddy region. Near to the Besyngytai has to be the Golden Land, as Ptolemaios wrote in his book.³⁴ These connections could suggest a relation of the Irrawaddy region to the legendary Suvannabhumi, the „Golden Land". In the next section, possible connections in this respect will be discussed in more detail.

The town of Berobai can be identified, mainly by comparing the map positions, with today's village of Bawmi. Like Berobai (Fig. 15), Bawmi (Fig. 16) is situated on a small bay, Bawmi Bay. Little can be said about the small village, which lies at the Bawmi River and already belongs to the Ayeyarwaddy region. At the beginning of the 20th century, it was a rather insignificant village on a minor trade route.

To close this section about the discussed area of Thandwe to Bawmi, there follows a short description of the (sea-)trade at the beginning of the 20th century in this area. This British point of view gives a good impression of earlier times:

The commerce of Sandoway is not extensive nor important. It consists of a small coasting trade, with all ports from Calcutta to Rangoon and a smaller land trade with the districts of Bassein and Prome [...] The trade to Bassein is taken in *thanbans*, a name given to native built cargo boat of English design. These boats range in size from 18 to 40 tons and sail round Cape Negrais. [...] The country boat season lasts from November to April [...] The land route to Prome is by the Taungup Pass which is just practicable for carts in the dry weather [...] The routes to Bassein are foot-tracks over the Kyagaung hills by way of Bawmi on the coast, and over the Yoma by the Ponsogyi and Thitkauk Passes. They are chiefly used for the exportation of cattle³⁵

³¹McCrindle, p. 197

³²Page 27 from the Woodside Report Annex 1, being the "Summary of each target fishing village surveyed in the Mawtin Coast region" by the Australian oil and gas company Woodside.

³³Sailing Directions, p. 172.

³⁴Ptolemaios, 2. Teilband, 7.2.17.

³⁵From the chapter "Occupations and Trade" and the section "Commerce and Trade", pp. 38 -39 of Tydd's book from 1912.

The Golden Khersones

The mouth of the river, which Ptolemaios called Khrysoanas (Fig. 18), is most probably the mouth of a creek in the southwest of Arakan in present-day Myanmar. The Thityaung Chaung, which is located more southern and actually has several connections to the Patheingyi River, could be considered as the river named Khrysoanas. Or the Chaungsa creek, located more northern near the village Chaungsa Thar, which was in former times perhaps a continuous waterway up to the Patheingyi River, so that it could have been somehow a waterway in antiquity. Nowadays definitely two roads lead from this coastal region through the mountains to the Patheingyi River north of Patheingyi. (Fig. 19).



Fig. 18: The Khrysoanas River, connected to the Palanda River in the east. The town Kokkonagara is situated north of the Khrysoanas waterway (British Museum)



Fig. 19: The Thityaung Chaung, a narrow creek situated south of the road from Ngwesaung to Patheingyi, leads from the sea to the Patheingyi River (Google Maps 2018)

The name of the town Kokkonagara, north of the Khrysoanas, on the "Golden Khersones" (Ptolemy's text 7.2.25), could also be written "Kokko Nagara". Translated from Sanskrit, it would simply mean "Kokko town". Concerning this special name, one can say that the word Kokko exists today as a place name of many villages in Myanmar. Only two villages or towns with the name Kokko existing in Myanmar today may be mentioned here. In the south of the already mentioned island Cheduba, which lies in the region Rakhine, there is, for example, a village named Kokko. Secondly, there is a village Kokko on the position latitude 19.7333 and longitude 94.85, a few miles west of the Irrawaddy in the Magway region. As can be seen here, Kokko appears also as a name component of at least one of the towns from Ptolemaios list, related to his map number 11.

As far as the origin of the place name Kokko is concerned, it can be said that it probably comes from the name of a tree. The Lebbeck tree is widely known as the Kokko/Koko tree in Myanmar and used as an ornamental tree. Kokko trees have been found to support the growth of higher quality grass for forage by cattle, sheep, and other herbivores. This characteristic makes it useful for human settlements alone through its presence. In earlier times, people with livestock husbandry will therefore certainly have liked to settle in the surroundings of such trees. The tree is also very toler-

ant of a wide range of soil conditions so that it could grow in many parts of ancient Myanmar. Its flowers are even said to have been used in ancient Burma to decorate the crowns of victorious fighters. The historian Ko Ko Naing also mentioned yet another interesting detail in his dissertation on Buddhism in Myanmar:

King Swasawke ascended the throne holding a fan made of palm-leaves so that peace would prevail in the kingdom. The whole country was shaken when this king constructed the Shwezigon pagoda in Innwa in 1383. On hearing this, a monk from Rakhine came to Awa and planted a kokko tree (*Albizzia lebbek*) [...] ³⁶

To such an extent has this tree been a symbolic plant in societies and polities of Myanmar since ancient times. The fact that no town called Kokko can be found today in the area investigated does not mean that there was no town of this name in antiquity. For example, the present ruined city of Bagan in Upper Myanmar has had some name changes over the centuries. It is even said to have emerged from 19 villages, one of which was called Kokko. Bagan/Pagan itself, however, will be discussed in more detail later. Another town from Ptolemaios list with the name component Kokko will be also discussed later, in connection with the southeast of Myanmar.

According to the position on the maps, the Palanda River must be the Pathein/Bassein River. Consequently, the city of Palanda on the ancient maps has to be the city Pathein of today. The word Palanda can be recognized more clearly in the name of a tributary of the Pathein River called Panmawadi River. (U.S. Army Map Service, NE 46-16 "Bassein").

In the detailed view of the map Burney MS 111 (Fig. 20), it becomes very clear, how exactly this coastal area, compared with a modern map (Fig. 21), corresponds to the estuary of the Pathein River. An accurate drawing will have been particularly essential for the safe circumnavigation of the western side of the mainland, that means the area between the river and the Bay of Bengal.

In the Greek town name Sabana for a trading place at the southern tip of the country, mainly the syllable *ban* from Banbwe (Fig. 22) was adopted. Just south of Banbwe, the Pagoda Point forms a headland with the Maw Tin Soon (Zun) Pagoda. It is said, that during the annual Maw Tin Zun Pagoda Festival a lot of stalls are dealing with all sorts of local products as traditional Pathein parasols, seafood and ornaments made of seashells. It is held for one month near the beach, attracting a large number of local and foreign guests³⁷. The Maw Tin Zun pagoda on Myanmar's coast suffered only minor damage by the tsunami in the year 2015³⁸, which is why one can certainly speak of a safe seafront location. Interestingly, the legend tells also the following about the mythical founder of Sri Ksetra in pre-Christian times, King Duttabaung:

Duttabaung was returning from a tour of his kingdom collecting revenues and tributes when his boat capsized and Duttabaung and all his party were drowned. The site where Duttabaung and his party were drowned was supposed to be near Maw Tin Zun (Cape Negris) at the mouth of Pathein River³⁹

³⁶Naing, p. 17. He quotes page 116 from a book in Burmese by Ashin Sirisobhana from 1974.

³⁷http://www.asean-china-center.org/english/2015-03/11/c_134054733.htm (09/14/2018).

³⁸<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/buddha-statues-survive-tsunami/> (09/14/2015).

³⁹*Anawrahta of Bagan Dynasty*, by Maung Maung, Yangon 2017.



Fig. 20 (top left): The Palanda River with the town Asbana, which is situated at a southern headland. The city with the same name as the river, Palanda, on the eastern side of the river (British Museum)

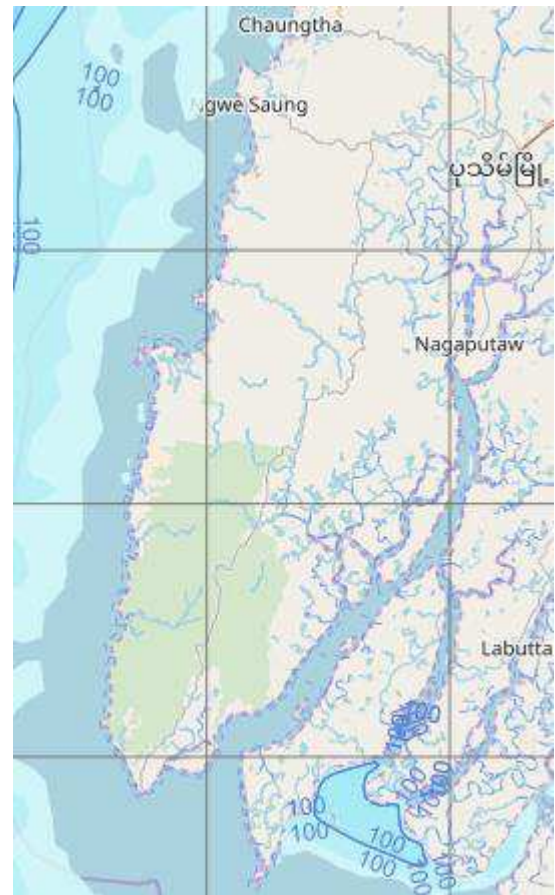


Fig. 21 (top right): The Patheingyi River with the city Bassein/Patheingyi on the eastern side of the river (OpenSeaMap 2018)



Fig. 22 (bottom right): The village Banbwe at the southern tip of the country named Pagoda Point (U.S. Army Map Service, ND 46-4 "Ama" 1960)

The drawing from Burney MS 111 alone may be the most visible indication of which region Claudius Ptolemaeus actually meant with Χρυσή Χερσόνησος, „The Golden Peninsula”. As a matter of fact, were quite a number of golden artefacts found in the territory of the ancient city-states of the Pyū. The Glass Palace Chronicle speaks of the "golden city of Tharehkittara" in relation to the foundation of Sri Ksetra⁴⁰. It is also said, that a golden palace was built in this city during the founding phase. The first king of the city in pre-Christian times is said to have received immense tribute payments in the form of silver and gold⁴¹. Thus, the coastal area of Khryse Khersonysos probably offered access to the treasures of the Pyū, via the river basins of the Irrawaddy and the

⁴⁰Tin and Luce, p. 14.

⁴¹Tin and Luce, p. 15.

Sittaung⁴² in the east of the country. The Pyū enjoyed a good yield of precious metals and minerals, mainly due to the favourable location of their cities in the vicinity of the Irrawaddy. With regard to the view of history by the Burmese chronicle *Sāsanavamsa*, which was written in the 19th century, Aung-Thwin noted in his book: “The third chapter deals with *Suvaṇṇabhūmi*, a place by then domestically accepted as the maritime provinces of Lower Burma”⁴³. McCrindle had been a little more precise about the localisation of the “Golden Land”:

The Golden Khersonese denotes generally the Malay Peninsula, but more specially the Delta of the Irawadi, which forms the province of Pegu, the *Suvarnabhumi* (Pali form,--*Sovannabhumi*) of ancient times. The Golden Region which lies beyond this, in the interior, is Burma, the oldest province of which, above Ava, is still, as Yule informs us, formally styled in State documents *Sonaparanta*, *i.e.* ‘Golden Frontier’⁴⁴

In the footnote to this McCrindle remarked:

Thornton notices in his *Gazetteer of India* (s. v. *Burmah*) that when Colonel Burney was resident in Ava, official communications were addressed to him under the authority of the “Founder of the great golden city of precious stones; the possessor of mines of gold, silver, rubies, amber and noble serpentine.”⁴⁵

The semischolar Rev. Francis Mason called the Irrawaddy in the mid-nineteenth century *suvanna nadee*, “The river of gold”⁴⁶.

After the takeover of the country of the Pyū by the Burmese in the 10th century CE, members of the Pyū people only appeared occasionally in official records. So Pyū were named, who had skills in gold, wood and silver crafts⁴⁷. Pyū and Burmese both belong to the Tibeto-Burman language family and are tonal languages. As Aung-Thwin wrote, are many important words in the two languages identical. He mentions the words “city”⁴⁸, “capital” and “kingdom”, which in my opinion also indicate, that the Burmese as heirs of the Pyū adopted their governmental structure. According to Aung-Thwin, only the word for “gold” was the same in the Pyū and Mon language. In contrast to modern historiography, which often mentioned the Mon as transmitters of culture, as with the script, to the Burmese⁴⁹.

⁴²About the gold mines at the Irrawaddy and Sittaung rivers see also the map labelled “Precious metals and stones, rare earths and radioactive metals” in Kraas, page 61.

⁴³Aung-Thwin, p. 145.

⁴⁴McCrindle, p. 198.

⁴⁵McCrindle, Footnote 26.

⁴⁶Aung-Thwin, p. 264/265.

⁴⁷Aung-Thwin, p. 176 and 222.

⁴⁸See Griffiths, p. 101 with Sanskrit *pura*, Pyu *prīn-h* and Burmese *praññ*, literally “royal city”.

⁴⁹Aung-Thwin, p. 173. The Mon language belongs to the Austro-Asiatic language family, which is why it only has loanwords in common with the languages of the Pyū and Burmese.

The Estuary of Several Rivers with the Perimoulikos Gulf

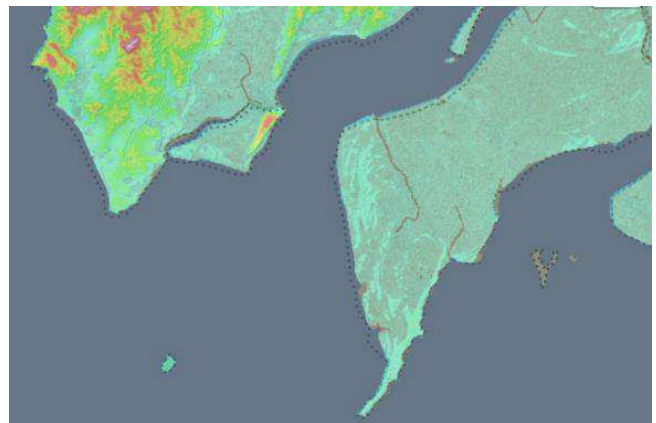


Fig. 23 (top left): Malëukolon promontory, east of the Palanda River (British Museum)

Fig. 24 (top right): Purian Point, east of the Pathein River, Topographic Map (OpenStreetMap 2018)

Fig. 25 (bottom left): Maleicolon promontory (National Library of Poland)

It can be assumed that the estuary of several rivers east of the Palanda River on the ancient maps represents the Irrawaddy River delta. In the further course of this study, it should become clear on what this assumption is based. On the first sight, however, the individual towns in this water-rich area on the maps according to Ptolemy, cannot easily be assigned to such ones in today's Irrawaddy delta. First of all, land areas in the Ayeyarwaddy region are slightly elevated areas compared to sea level, that means lowland. The sea level has certainly changed over the centuries, as well as a varying degree of erosion and settlement of river sediment has occurred⁵⁰. Faced with such natural changes and in order to orientate oneself on the maps, it is necessary to search for place name similarities between modern town names in this coastal area and the Greek and Latin ones from Ptolemy's text. In fact, however, there are also spots here that certainly have not changed much topographically in the course of time. This is the case with the Cape Malëu Kolon (named Malëukolon in Fig. 23 and Maleicolon in Fig. 25), which most probably denoted the Purian Point with the nearby village Kyauk-kalat. The Purian Point is situated in the southernmost part of the Irrawaddy delta basin (Fig. 24).

The Attaba River (Fig. 26) refers in its name to today's town of Labutta, which lies on a small branch of the Irrawaddy, which is now called the Ywe River. Kolipolis (Kolepolis), situated near the Attaba River, could refer, regarding its position on the maps, to the small town of Pyinzalu (U.S.

⁵⁰There is a journal article named „Evolution of the Irrawaddy delta region since 1850” by Peter J. Hedley, Michael I. Bird and Ruth A. J. Robinson, published in *The Geographical Journal* Vol. 176, No. 2 (June 2010), pp. 138-149.

Army Map Service, ND 46-4), respectively Pyinsalu. Greek-speaking visitors will simply have understood the word Pyinsalu phonetically as “*polis*”, the well-known Greek word for city. Today, Pyinsalu is a sub-township on the so-called Pyinsalu Island, in Burmese Pyinzalu Kyun, and belongs to the Labutta district. It is located west of the estuary of the Pyinsalu River and east of the Ywe River. Masses of water enclosed this sub-township after the cyclone Nargi's tsunami disaster of 2008. So, it was spoken of isolated Pyinsalu Islands, which had to be supplied by waterway by the disaster relief organisation. At the flooding in 2015, mainly the town Pyinsalu was surrounded by water.

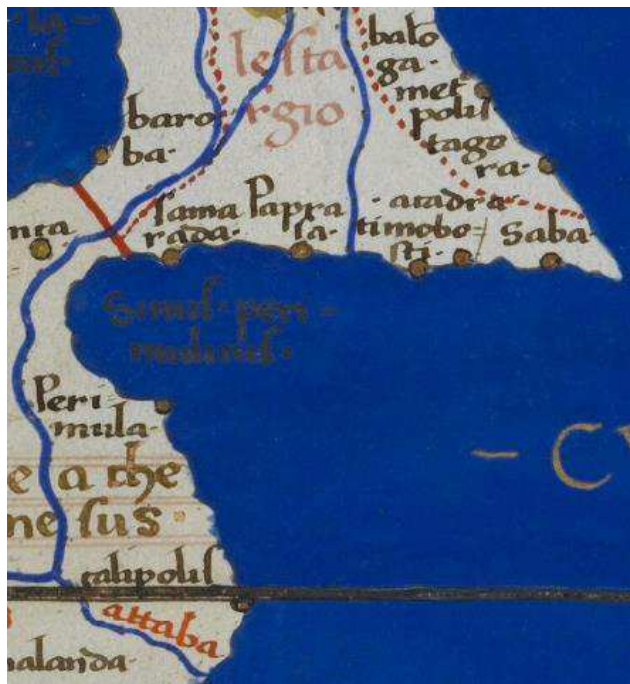


Fig. 26 (top left): The Peri-mulic Gulf, lying between Colipolis (Greek Kolipolis), Perimula (Greek Perimoula) and Baloga (National Library of Poland)

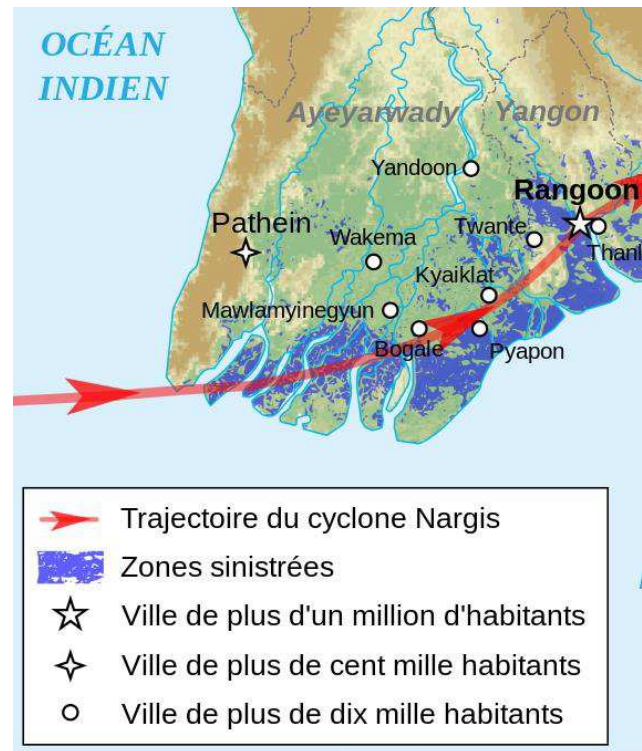
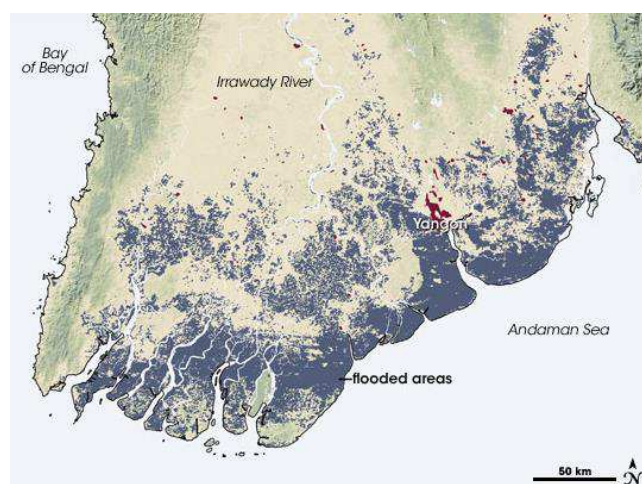


Fig. 27 (top right): By the cyclone Nargis affected Lowland Area of Myanmar in 2008 with the towns Mawlamyinegyun (Moulmeingyun) and Bogale in the Irrawaddy Delta (detail of a Wikipedia map based on OpenStreetMap)

Fig. 28 (bottom right): By the cyclone Nargis flooded areas of Myanmar in 2008 (NASA/Robert Simon)



The ancient Perimoula most probably refers to today's town of Moulmeingyun, whereby the prefix *Peri(-)* should actually only be the Greek word *Περι* in the meaning of "around". Then also the name of the so-called “gulf of Perimoulikos” provides a new meaning, in the sense of "gulf that surrounds Moula". The town Moulmeingyun of today is the seat of the Mawlamyinegyun Town-

ship⁵¹ in the Labutta District. Moulmeingyun is the last major town on one of the many branches of the Irrawaddy⁵².

The settlement of Zabai, Saba in Latin, located on the ancient maps on a headland, is very probably a village on the Thapetgyi/Thapetkyi (pronounced Sabaychi) River today, likely Subokkwe. Subokkwe is located east of the Thapetgyi River and west of the Bogale River. The Sobanus River of the old maps has to be the Thapetgyi River. By name and position, the settlement of Thagora, Tagora in Latin, can most probably be identified as the village of Tarahpigon⁵³, which is situated east of the Bogale River, more precisely at its mouth.

The capital Balonga is situated on the maps according to Ptolemy by the sea. As one can easily guess from its name, this should be the current district capital Bogale (pronounced Bogalay) on the Bogale River. Nicolaus Germanus tagged this settlement with a quite similar name on his map, namely as Baloga (Fig. 26). Greeks in the Roman Empire may have generally used the more common name Balonga instead of Bogale perhaps because they were more familiar with the Latin word *longa*, which of course means long.

Bogale as a place isn't as insignificant today as one might think. At least until recently, there were even regular liner ships from Yangon to Bogale⁵⁴. In this century there were already several severe storms that flooded the Irrawaddy delta to a considerable extent. In 2008, the Cyclone Nargis had particularly washed over this coastal region and transformed the lowland into a maritime area (Fig. 28). Due to the floods, the sea almost reached the town of Bogale in the years 2008 and 2015 (Fig. 27). On 1 August 2015, the water masses were away a few kilometres south of Bogale⁵⁵. In the region around this district capital, after the night of 2 to 3 May 2015, 200 of the 385 villages were no longer in existence⁵⁶.

In the context of these known extensive floods, one may wonder whether the so-called Perimulic Gulf, which Ptolemy located in this area (Fig. 26), was not also such a temporary phenomenon. In recent years, research into the causes of such devastating weather events has led to a number of new insights. As climate researchers were able to find out, for instance, there was a warm period in Europe between 100 BC and 400 CE, also known as the "Roman Warm Period" or "Roman Climatic Optimum". As for Asia, there was a similar warm climate period from the Chinese mid-Western Han to the end of the Eastern Han, that means from about 150 BCE to 200 CE.⁵⁷ It can be assumed that the worldwide and extensive burning of fuels and smelting of ores by mankind was also a not negligible cause of global warming at that time, as it is today. These temperature conditions are also likely to have had a particular impact on coastal areas. Increased melting of ice caps and glaciers or

⁵¹Besides, the famous Burmese politician Thakin Nu or U Nu had withdrawn from active politics until 1946 to write his book "What is Marxism?" in the small town of Moulmeingyun. This, of course, might have somewhat increased the significance of the town.

⁵²Read the interesting report "Myanmar's River of Spirits" by the American journalist Kira Salak about her adventurous stay in Moulmeingyun (page 18) and on the Irrawaddy down to the sea in *National Geographic Reader: Living in the World: Cultural Themes for Writers*, Boston 2014. Like Alexandros in antiquity, the modern author has travelled to territories where Westerners seldom or never came.

⁵³Name as on the (clearly legible) reprint of map ND 46-4 by NIMA (National Imagery and Mapping Agency) 2-00.

⁵⁴See, for example: *Stefan Loose Reiseführer Myanmar, Birma: mit Downloads aller Karten*.

⁵⁵https://themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/Delineation_Map_Bogale_EMSR130_01Aug2015_0.pdf (11/23/2018).

⁵⁶<https://www.tagesspiegel.de/themen/reportage/zehn-jahre-nach-zyklon-nargis-der-toedliche-tropensturm-der-myanmar-bis-heute-zeichnet/21232298.html> (11/23/2018).

⁵⁷See Ts'ui-jung Liu: "A Retrospection of Climate Changes and their Impacts in Chinese History-The Challenge of Climate Change", p. 6-7, in *Nature, Environment and Culture in East Asia*, Leiden 2013.

increasing storm frequency with heavy rainfall due to higher temperatures could have led to rising sea levels.

An indication of one temporary sea-level rise is a reference in the Glass Palace Chronicle concerning the year of death of the Pyu King named Thathi. Converting the year according to the ancient Burmese calendar system the following is supposed to have happened therefore in the year 65 CE: “About the time of his death the earth quaked over all the city; the ground was rent into fragments; water oozed through; the sun and moon was in total eclipse for one month”⁵⁸ This report can also be interpreted today as meaning that there was a severe earthquake in the Pyu dominion at that time with soil displacement and floods. In addition, it can be assumed by the words that a volcanic eruption, probably somewhere in present-day Indonesia, could have caused the sky in the region to darken for a month. If one knows that in 62 CE an earthquake also shook the Roman city of Pompeii on the Gulf of Naples and in 79 CE a volcanic eruption finally buried this Mediterranean city completely under an ash fall, it is not difficult to consider similar events in this era in the Gulf of Bengal at least possible.

The Indian geologist Rajendran stated 2013, that the earliest tsunamis occurred in the Indian region between the 2nd and 6th centuries CE, evidenced by coral debris of the southern Car Nicobar Island⁵⁹. In the section “Discussion” of his geophysical article he wrote:

Thus, the calibrated AMS radiocarbon dates of the shells (B.C. 20–A.D. 440 and A.D. 430–750) from the lower layer and upper level debris sequence represent maximum limiting ages for the two tsunamis in the early part of the first millennium. [...] In this context, the age of 1640 cal years B.P. attributed to a sand bed from a core obtained from a lagoon in southeastern Sri Lanka is also noteworthy [Jackson, 2008]. Anecdotal reference comes from the Mahavamsa chronicles of Sri Lanka, which mentions about a sea surge dated to ~B.C. 200 [see Geiger, 1912, p. 147]. The Mahavamsa “tsunami”, if true, could be an earlier event, as compared to the earliest tsunami evidence (B.C. 20–A.D. 440) from Car Nicobar.⁶⁰

A further reference in the Glass Palace Chronicle to a natural disaster, at this period, can be found for the year 94 CE. It is told that: “A great whirlwind arose at that time [...] Thereupon the whole country was alarmed [...] and the people split into three divisions”⁶¹ This could indicate, that also at that time something like a cyclone swept through the Ayeyarwady region with its ancient country of Tharehkittara, and caused disorder, if not to say chaos, to a large extent.

Such natural disasters and climatic changes will generally also have had global effects on agriculture⁶². Migrations of whole ethnic groups in search of better living conditions are known to research for the periods mentioned. This process went hand in hand with the disintegration of old orders and polities and the rise of new states. Basically, one can say that the migration of people also led to an increase in terms of trade contacts. People had to search worldwide for resources, which were perhaps no longer sufficiently available in the old homeland. So much for the plausible explanations for the existence of a so-called Gulf of Perimoulkos in the 1st to 2nd century CE on the maps ac-

⁵⁸Translation by Tin and Luce, pp. 24/25.

⁵⁹Rajendran, p. 1345. Samples taken include such from Mus in Car Nicobar with the calibrated age of dates 70-440 CE, BC 20– 360 CE (Rajendran, Table 2 and p. 1354).

⁶⁰Rajendran, p. 1359. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands study by Rajendran in the year 2013 shows no correlation to the study of the Karagan Lagoon in Sri Lanka, named “Holocene Indian Ocean tsunami history in Sri Lanka“, which is available online at <https://www.geosociety.org/datarepository/2014/2014305.pdf> (09/24/2018).

⁶¹Translation by Tin and Luce, p.p 27/28.

⁶²Elizabeth Moore and U Win Maung have placed a focus on changes of the rivers in Myanmar in their article "Change in the landscape of first millennium AD Myanmar" published 2006 in the *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research*, 4 (2). pp. 1-26.

cording to Ptolemy.

According to the coordinates given by Ptolemy, a "land of the Leistai" was located north-east of Perimoula, with a place called Samarade or Smarade. In original Greek view, the *leistai* were raiders and by one definition "people independent of control by a city-state"⁶³. In Roman times, *leistai* was simply the designation for bandits or brigands in Greek-speaking provinces such as Judaea. According to the Alexandrian Ptolemaios, the "land of robbers" east of the Ganges is said to be bordered by a hill country with tigers and elephants. In the lowland area of the Irrawaddy delta, only the Thamo (pronounced Samo) Reserved Forest⁶⁴, located south of Twante town, can in terms of topography and linguistics be taken into consideration for the identification of such a wilderness. The legendary Glass Palace Chronicle tells us the following about the security situation in the kingdom of Tharehkittara (Sri Ksetra) around the year 94 CE: "[...] this noble kingdom, albeit it was founded by the Seven Exalted Ones, became disordered and ungovernable, infested with thieves, robbers, plunderers, and cut-throats."⁶⁵ If one were to believe this information, from this source, for this time, the existence of a "land of robbers", as Ptolemaios called it, in the south this city-state is quite conceivable.

In the 19th century, the British colonial power in Burma was busy hunting for robbers and rebels, which were called dacoits, on the upper reaches of the Irrawaddy. Strangely enough rebels and bandits are said to have still operated in the Irrawaddy River delta during the 1970s⁶⁶. The countless waterways and forests will certainly have offered many hiding places.

There are several river branches of the Irrawaddy to the east of Bogale. These watercourses are flowing into the sea and at least today have their own river names. One of them is called Donyan River (U.S. Army Map Service NE-46 16 "Bassein"). The Donyan runs south of the Thamo Reserved Forest. It is possibly due to that river that ancient western seafarers got to know the entire Irrawaddy River under the name Daona.

When the kingdom of Ava existed in the 18th and 19th centuries, the Irrawaddy was known in the west as the Ava River. Professor Mannert wrote at that time in his proficiency as a prospective geographer: "So the most western river, Doana, is today's Ava stream. Ptolemy lets it flow from the northern side of the mountains between Bengal and Morung; but gives it yet another source in the eastern mountains, which separate the Ava and Pegu rivers."⁶⁷ The German scholar was so sure of his identification of the three major rivers from Ptolemy's description of the region beyond the Ganges that he wrote: "They can be no others than the Ava, Pegu and Menam rivers."⁶⁸

⁶³Paul Mckechnie in "Outsiders in the Greek Cities in the Fourth Century BC" (1989), p. 101 with his interpretation of *leistes* as "Raider" on pages 104 to 106.

⁶⁴See U.S. Army Map Service, NE-46 16.

⁶⁵Tin and Luce, p. 27.

⁶⁶https://griffithreview.com/wp-content/uploads/Selth.Burma_.Essay_.Final_.set_.pdf (10/19/2018).

⁶⁷Mannert, p. 263 in a translation from German.

⁶⁸Mannert, p. 262 in a translation from German.

The Daona River

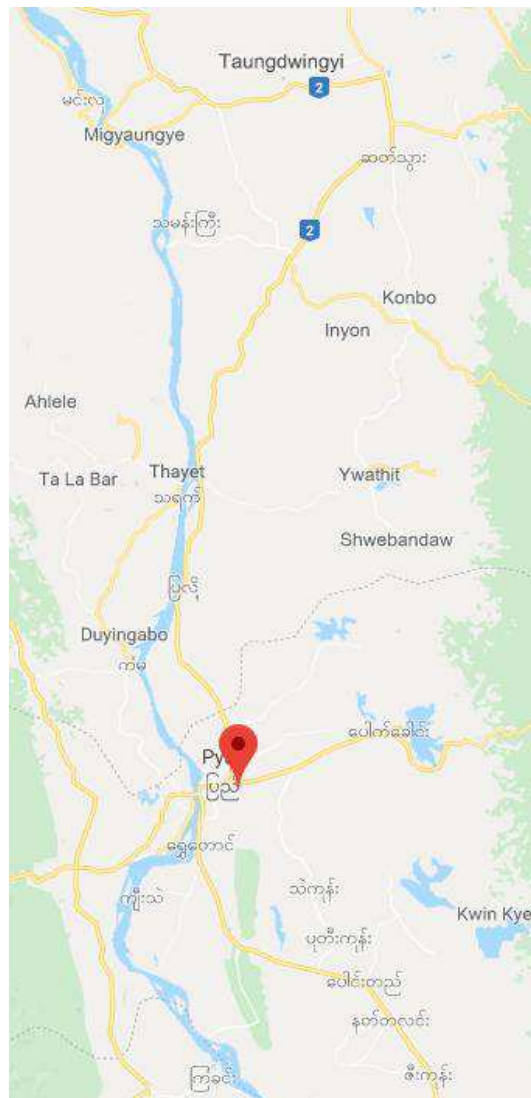


Fig. 29 (top left): The towns of Daona, Bardoara and Sinda and the capital Khortatha near the river Daona (British Museum)

Fig. 30 (top right): The town Taungdwingyi and the village Ta la Bar with the location of the ruins of Sri Ksetra (marker), all near the course of the Ayeyarwady River (Google Maps 2018)

Fig. 31 (bottom left): The towns of Doama, Bardoara and Sinda und the capital Cartaca near the river Daona (National Library of Poland)

Daona on Ptolemy's map (Fig. 29) could mean ancient Beikthano, whereby only the partial word *thano* was used for Daona. The Pyū city of Beikthano, which has its name from the Burmese form of the name of the Indian god Vishnu, lies twelve miles west of Taungdwingyi [təʊndwɪndzi] (Fig. 30). The Taungdwingyi region itself is one of the earliest inhabited regions in Myanmar. Beikthano is currently considered the oldest Pyū site, with the earliest texts with Brahmi letters found in Myanmar⁶⁹. The earliest radiocarbon datings for Beikthano show us dates back to the early 2nd century BC. Objects found in Beikthano with supra-regional provenance are scarce. It is therefore also concluded that this city had limited trade activities⁷⁰. One reason for this might be that it was not directly lying on the Irrawaddy River. Its importance surely based on its regional production of agricultural goods using a sophisticated irrigation system⁷¹. Due to limited trade, the originally introduced Hinduism, which is confirmed by specific structures and objects found in Beikthano, will have come into contact with other and newer religious movements only delayed and without deeper impact. Buddhist buildings, such as those showing South Indian influence, are only attested for the late period of the city.

As both its position on the map from Burney MS 111 (Fig. 29) and its name indicate, the settlement of Bardoara was probably located in the area of today's Ta La Bar (Fig. 30). Ta La Bar is one of the many villages in the Thayet district and also a village tract⁷². So, if Ta La Bar should represent the successor settlement of Bardoara, the place still has a certain significance today, which is also confirmed by its representation by Google Maps. Officially the place is written, in Latin transcription, Ta La Par and beside the actual Ta La Par, there is also a southern Ta La Par. In an otherwise sparsely populated area, these two villages are surrounded by even four more villages and are conveniently located on one road to Thayet and therefore to the Irrawaddy River⁷³.

The course of the river corresponds very well when comparing the old (Fig. 29) and new map (Fig. 30), especially to the west and south of the ancient city of Sri Ksetra (marker on Fig. 30). Sinda and Kortatha on the Greek map from Burney MS 111 probably designated together this ancient city, which carried the Indian name of "honoured field". Legend states that it was founded by two blind born brothers, who had travelled down the Irrawaddy River. On the drawn western maps, the metropolis was oddly enough relocated to the coast. Maybe to express the fact that this city-state owned or used some port towns there. Furthermore, the route from Śrī Kṣetra via the Irrawaddy to the sea had already been depicted on the maps when showing, for example, the Golden Khersones.

For ancient seafarers like one Alexandros, who was mentioned by Ptolemy, harbour towns were, of course, more relevant than inland cities, even if these cities were capitals like Sri Ksetra. Despite its poor accessibility the cartographer nevertheless did not want to position Sri Ksetra on maps too far away from the coast, just because of its importance as capital⁷⁴. Anyhow, Sri Ksetra's control of the country most probably extended as far as the area between the Irrawaddy and Yangon Rivers. The Chinese pilgrim Hsüan-tsang still noted in the 7th century CE: "Southward from this the country

⁶⁹Aung-Thwin, p. 168.

⁷⁰Berliet, p. 25.

⁷¹Berliet, p. 24.

⁷²https://themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/VT%20Map_Thayet%20Tsp_Magway_MIMU575v01_01Dec10_A3.pdf (09/14/2018).

⁷³http://www.themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/Tsp_Map_VL_Thayet_-_Magway_MIMU154v04_03May2016_A1.pdf (09/14/2018).

⁷⁴The present town name Pyay, meaning "capital" in translation (Griffiths, p. 54), shows that its former importance never fell into oblivion.

borders the sea; it is the kingdom of Shih-li-ch'a-ta-lo (Criksetra)"⁷⁵. Around the year 1600, the Tibetan author Taranatha wrote about the successor state of Sri Ksetra, the grand Pagan, that "Pukham", was situated on the ocean. Aung-Thwin commented: "That means both sources considered Lower Burma and its maritime coast to have been very much a part of the kingdom of Pagán, from which place one could, indeed, go to South India"⁷⁶.

Thankfully, the river section with its river bends between Beikthano and Sri Ksetra, was drawn pretty accurately on the map from the Burney manuscript. However, concerning the importance of the two city-states, this is not surprising. In contrast to Beikthano, Sri Ksetra certainly had ambitions to be a regional power that reached as far as the sea and to cultivate external contacts. The ancient connection of Sri Ksetra to the sea had already been deemed to be fundamental by the Pyū themselves. This assumption is illustrated by a traditional legend, in which Buddha himself is said to have foreseen the foundation of Sri Ksetra with the following words: "And the sea-courses will dry up around the foundations of Tharehkittara."⁷⁷

Even from a geographical perspective, the drawings of Sri Ksetra according to Ptolemy, with a large surface of water lying immediately to the east of the city, are not simply figments of imagination. This can be seen from the following statement by Stargardt:

The eastern side of Sri Ksetra where the great East Tank once lay is today still called *pinle* (the sea) by local inhabitants, despite the fact that the modern ground level has been extensively raised and recontoured by the modern Irrigation Department and no traces of the ancient irrigation tank can now be seen from the surface.⁷⁸

The names Kortatha (Greek) and cartaca (Latin) on the western maps are very likely foreign forms of the word Khettara. Actually, at the time of the first dynasty of Sri Ksetra, the city is said to have been called Tharakhettara.⁷⁹ It is also said that it was originally founded as the big city named Thare Khettare⁸⁰. Ptolemaios has also called Kortatha/Kordathra⁸¹ a capital in his book. On the map by Nicolaus Germanicus, the area from this city to the Daona River is called Sindi (Fig. 31). This name probably stands for the kingdom of Sri Ksetra itself. This because the word Sindi again could be derived from the Pali word Sudhamma. Sri Ksetra presumably carried the honorary title of a Sudharmanagara (Sanskrit), a "city of the good law", since it was already regarded in ancient times as a guardian of Buddhist teachings. As well as the linguist Shorto, Aung-Thwin has argued, that Sudhammanagara could have been an etymon for Śrī Kṣetra, at least as far as the 7th century CE is concerned⁸².

The Irrawaddy River is officially called Ayeyarwady, also written Ayeyarwaddy, spelt *erawati* in Burmese. The Chindwin River flows, coming from the Northwest, into the Irrawaddy. The Chindwin originates in a broad valley of the Kachin State of Burma, roughly 26°26'18"N 96°33'32"E. There some small rivers, as the Tawan, and the Taron (also known as Turong or Towang) meet. One could consider the western word Daona by Ptolemy to perhaps be a derivation of Chindwin, or

⁷⁵Aung-Thwin, p. 54.

⁷⁶Aung-Thwin, p. 65.

⁷⁷Translation by Tin and Luce, p. 7.

⁷⁸Stargardt, p. 363.

⁷⁹Aung-Thwin, p. 139.

⁸⁰Majumdar, p. 190.

⁸¹Ptolemaios, Teilband. 2 p. 723.

⁸²Aung-Thwin, pp. 92/93.

rather of one of the names of the source rivers of the Chindwin, called Tawan and Towang. On the basis of this one could make further assumptions about the specific area, from which the Pyū had originally immigrated to the fertile Irrawaddy basin in prehistoric times. At least, the influx of this people from the northern direction seems to be undisputed.

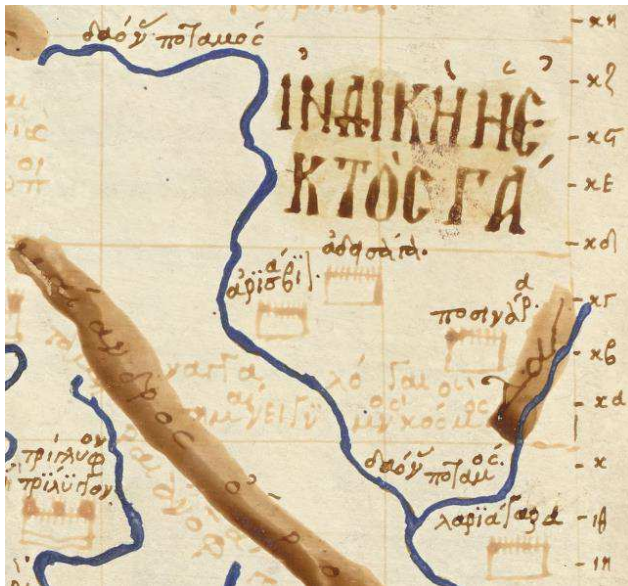


Fig. 32: The upper course of the Daona River with its two branches in “India beyond the Ganges” (British Museum)

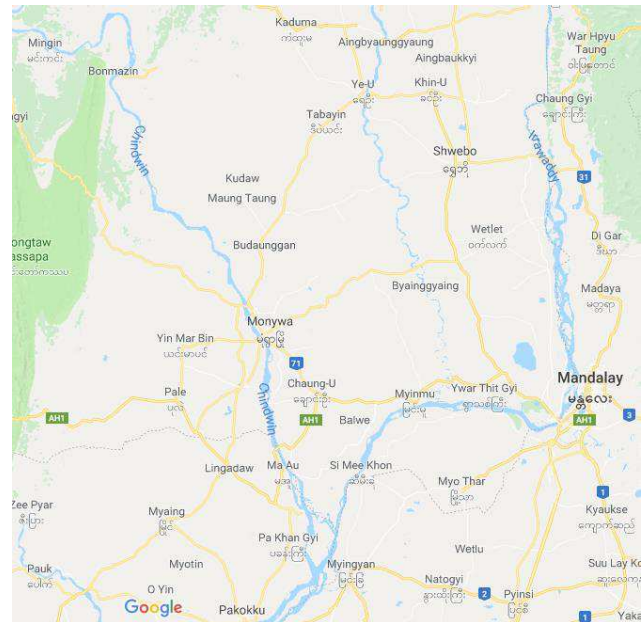


Fig. 33: The area between the Chindwin River and the upper course of the Irrawaddy River (Google Maps 2018)

The mountain range called Maiandros (Fig. 32) in Greek by Ptolemaios and located west of the Daona River, corresponds in position to the Mahudaung range, west of the Chindwin River. This identification was already made by Gerini:

p. 51. **Maiandros.** This toponym possibly still survives in *Mahudaung*, the mountain range running north and south between the Pondaung mountains on the west and the lower Chindwin River on the east. In some maps it incorrectly appears as *Maladaung*, but in the „Imperial Gazetteer of India,“ vol. x, p. 228, the name is spelt *Mahudaung*, this being presumably the modern Burmese corrupted form of an older toponym — *Mahendra*, *Mandara*, or *Mahyuttara* — recorded by Ptolemy as Maiandros. In Do Donis' map this mountain range is made to stretch north-westwards almost as far as **Alosanga** (= Shillong, see No. 37), passing close to the east of **Tugma metropolis** (= Tammu, see No. 39), which, if correct, would make it to include, besides the Mahudaung, the Pondaung range, as well as a portion of the Arakan Roma further to the south.⁸³

The American librarian John Kirtland Wright later wrote in his commentary to the so-called Leardo Map, created about 1453 or 1454:

76 M°. *meandrus*: Maeandrus Mons in Farther India, Ptol (VII, 2:8 (FA26));=?Mahudaung mountains in Upper Burma (Gerini, 51, 832). No corresponding mountain shown on either CA or CE.⁸⁴

⁸³Gerini, p. 832.

⁸⁴ “Appendix – Detailed Comments on the Map”, p. 37 of Wright's book. The map is said to have been made around

Shortly after Leardo, probably in the year 1476, Nicolaus Germanus named the mountain range on his map also meandrus mons.

At the dawn of the 19th century, the German historian Mannert almost poetically expressed himself in his identification of this mountainous chain:

The mountain Mäandrus can be regarded as the southern continuation of that; the mountain range, which runs from Tipra⁸⁵ southwards around the Arakan realm and forces the Ava stream to run through the eastern great plains straight to the south, since otherwise, it would seek its mouths on the western coast.⁸⁶

The distinctive, skein-shaped twisted river meanders of the Irrawaddy north of today's Mandalay (Fig. 33), were particularly aptly represented by the cartographer of the map from Burney MS 111 (Fig. 32). On the maps according to Ptolemy, both the Irrawaddy and the Chindwin were labelled as Daona. South of where the Chindwin joins the Irrawaddy, lies the well-known ancient ruined city of Bagan. According to some Burmese chronicles, Bagan was founded in the 2nd century CE. As legend claims it, in the year 107 of our era, Thamoddarit founded the city of Pagan (Bagan) and the Pagan Dynasty⁸⁷. However, Aung-Thwin has conclusively shown in his book, that it was actually founded as a real 'city' only in the 7th century CE. Hudson also had only earliest archaeological data for the 8th century CE⁸⁸ in 2004. Either way, it should come as no surprise that Pagan does not appear on our medieval maps, not even with a similar name. This because these maps have their data basis in the time of Klaudios Ptolemaios around the year 150 CE. Even if the city of Bagan was really founded in the 2nd century CE, one could not expect such a great topicality of maps for distant parts of the world at that time, as we have it with maps today. Furthermore, Bagan certainly did not have the importance at its time of origin, that it would certainly obtain by the eleventh century. According to the domestic chronicles, the time of King Thamoddarit was, moreover, a period of upheaval and not of stability. Cities are said to have been both founded as also devastated within a short time⁸⁹. The presumption of a change in the economic bases of the country can clearly be seen in a legend from the Glass Palace Chronicle. In it, the historical Buddha is said to have predicted something about a great city to be built in the future and ruled by the kings Thamoddarit and Pyusawhti: "[...] the people of that kingdom shall not till the land but shall live by merchandise, selling and buying, and their speech shall not be the words of truth but falsehood."⁹⁰ In this account, one can also see that later generations regarded the early period of Pagan as quite immoral and thus implicitly non-Buddhistic.

Comparing the ancient with the modern maps, Arisabion (Aresabion in the Codex Vaticanus Graecus 191), must have been located close to the Chindwin River. With regard to name similarity, it

1452 or 1453 by the Venetian cartographer Giovanni Leardo. Meandrus is situated on it near the Paradiso Terrestre, the "Terrestrial Paradise" (Wright, Fig. 6 "Detailed key map: east-central section").

⁸⁵By Tipra is Tripura meant.

⁸⁶Mannert, pp. 261/262 in a translation from German. Mannert consistently referred to the Ayeyarwady in his book as Ava River. The royal city of Ava was the capital of Upper Burma from 1765 to 1783 and from 1821 to 1842 and therefore gave its name to the river where it was situated.

⁸⁷*Hmannan Yazawin* (in Burmese) Vol. 1 (2003 ed.), pp. 185–188., by the Ministry of Information Myanmar, Yangon.

⁸⁸Hudson, p. 207.

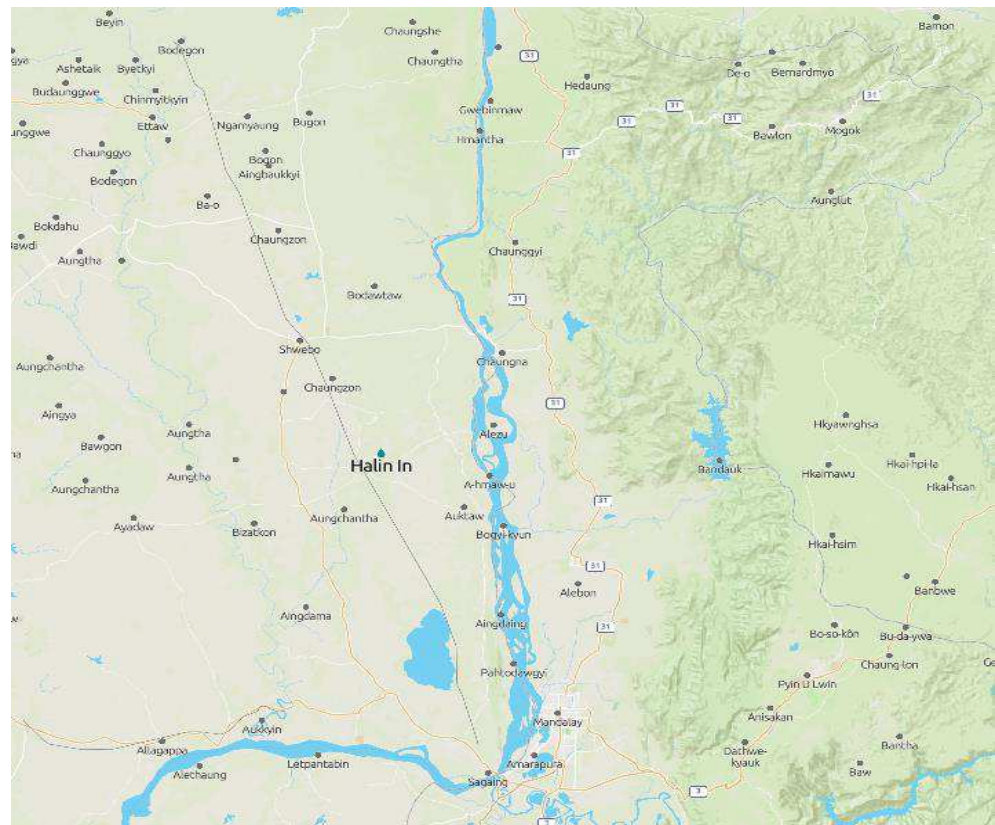
⁸⁹Tin and Luce, p. 28.

⁹⁰Translation by Tin and Luce, p. 29.

most likely can be identified with Shabye-in⁹¹. The initial syllable *Ari* is also to be found in a designation for Bagan used at least in the Middle Ages, namely Arimaddanapūr. An occupation of the area around Shabye-in already since prehistoric time is archaeologically proven. In Nyaunggan, for example, which lies north of Shabye-in, bronzes from about 1500 BC were excavated among other things at the beginning of the 21st century. On the map according to Ptolemy, there is a region called Nangalogai on the western side of the river Daona, which is translated from the Greek by Ptolemy as "the world of the naked". McCrindle supposed, however, that Naga tribes could be meant by this word⁹², what would also be more probable regarding ethnology. Because of the similarity of the name and the proximity to the village Nyaung-gan a relation with it could exist as well.

Colonel Gerini already counted the towns of Arisabion and Adeisaga to Upper Burma in his research book. But since the map from Burney MS 111 might not have been available to him, he supposed Arisabion to lie much further north. Somewhat further north from Bhamo, following the Irrawaddy, behind Shenbo. Professor Mannert, again, had located Arisabium (Latin) deeper in the south, on the banks of the Ava River, near the former Prom, today's Pyay⁹³. If he had heard of the ruined city of Sriksetra at that time, his localization would certainly have been more accurate.

Fig. 34: The village Halin, once a Pyu capital, east of the Irrawaddy River and the mountains. In the west of Halin some narrower watercourses (Mapbox and Mapcartea 2018)



Posinara/Posindara⁹⁴ on the Greek map (Fig. 32) according to Ptolemaios, by comparison, is situated on the position of the ancient Pyu city Halin or Hanlin (Fig. 34). To the south and east of the settlement runs the Daona River and further east of this lie the Damasa Mountains.

Nowadays, three sites share the name Halin. These are Halin Pindale, Halin Twinma and Halin

⁹¹See the map NF 46-8 by the U.S. Army Map Service.

⁹²McCrindle, p. 223.

⁹³Mannert, p. 268.

⁹⁴Ptolemaios, 2. Teilband, p. 729.

Taungbo (Fig. 35). The beginnings of the Pyū-city Halin reach back at least to the 1st century CE. The earlier phases of Halin have been assigned to the 1st to 6th centuries CE⁹⁵. The former city is a village today named Hanlin, which is also known under the name Halin or Halim.

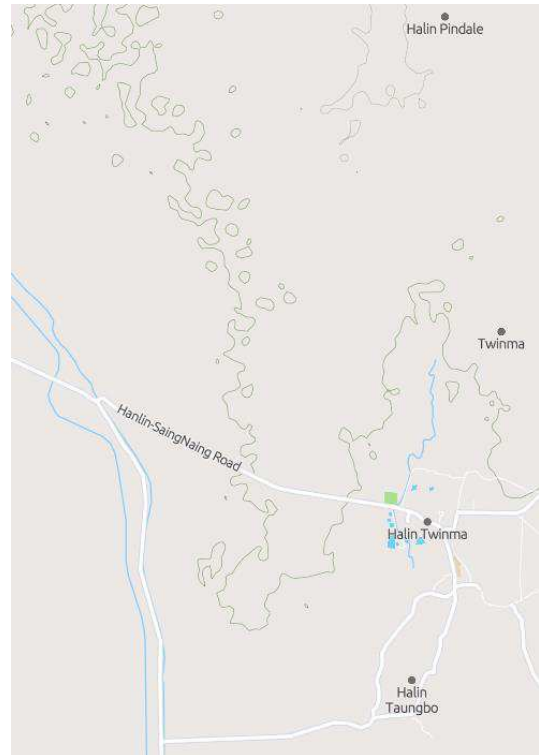
Fig. 35 (right): Halin Pindale, Halin Twinma and Halin Taungbo (Mapbox and Mapcartea 2018)

As the Scottish journalist and colonial administrator James George Scott wrote, was Halin known in legendary history as Hantha Nagare and was the capital of a kingdom⁹⁶.

The name Posinara in Ptolemaios text could be a clipping of the name Hamsanagara. Greeks, let alone Romans, are unlikely to have visited this inland city ever themselves during its existence.

Therefore, a mutilation of the cities name, due to misunderstandings in its transmission, would come as no surprise. Hantha is the Burmese word for a mythical bird, whether this is a duck or goose, called *hamsa* in Sanskrit.

Scott further wrote that an Indian prince from Benares is considered to be the founder of the city and the last king ruling there was called Pyu Min. As his source for this traditional tales about Hantha Nagare, Scott stated a chronicler.



It is generally believed that Halin gained some importance during the Pyū millennium through the intermediary trade between China and India. In addition, mining products from nearby mines will have been trading goods of the city⁹⁷. The mountain range Damasa/Dabasa⁹⁸, mentioned by Ptolemy, probably means the mountains surrounding Mogok (Fig. 34), which lie east of Halin and are rich in precious stones. Professor Mannert already stated in 1797, that the Damasi mountains have to be the mountain range, which runs south between the Ava and the Pegu River⁹⁹.

⁹⁵Moore 2001, p. 44.

⁹⁶Scott, Part II.-Vol. I., pp. 115/116.

⁹⁷Berliet, p. 34.

⁹⁸Ptolemaios, 2. Teilband, p. 727.

⁹⁹Mannert, p. 262. Between 1803 and 1807 Mannert held a position as scientific director of a prominent map printing company in Nuremberg, where he published numerous maps. These were sought-after for their accuracy by travellers, researchers and merchants all over the world. The precision of the "Homännischen" maps was based on astronomical positioning, which was more accurate than with French and Dutch maps.

The Doruis River



Fig. 36: The town of Pandasa on the river Doruis and the town of Anagagara on the "Great Bay" (National Library of Poland)

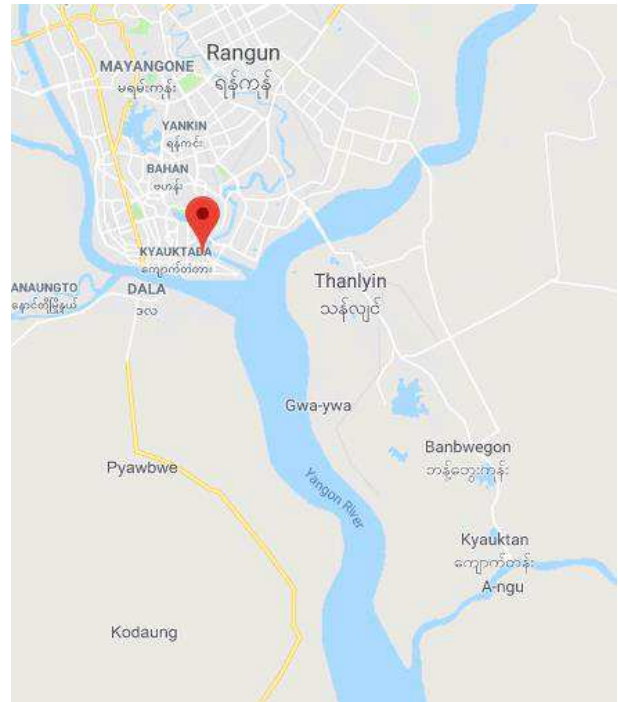


Fig. 37: The Pazundaung Township at the Yangon River and the town of A-ngu (Google Maps 2018)

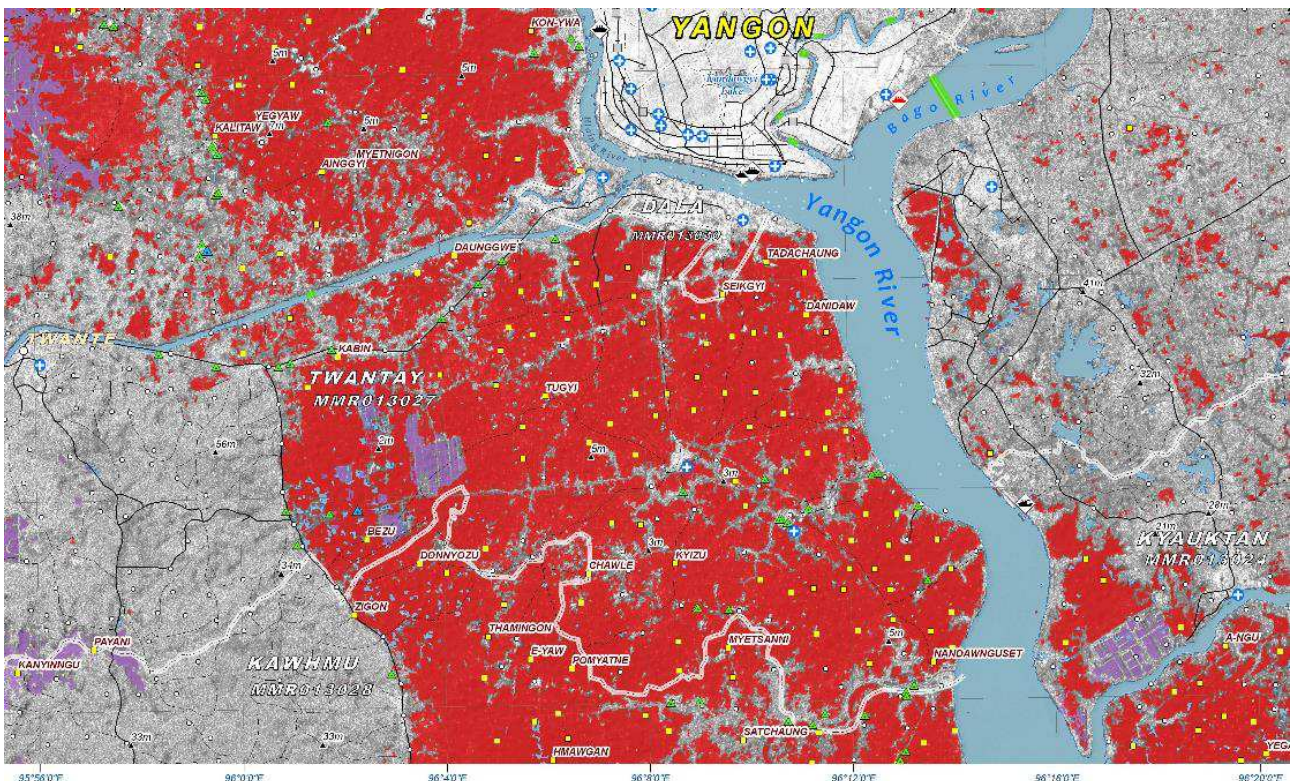


Fig. 38: The flooded area at the Yangon River 2008 in red according to satellite images (Unosat 2008)

The settlement of Anagagara on the map by Nicolaus Germanus is called Aganagara in most transcripts of Ptolemy's text, in one manuscript it is also called Aganagora¹⁰⁰. The map from Burney MS 111 uses the spelling Aganagara.

On the old maps situated a small distance east of the river Doruis (Fig. 36), today's village of A-ngu (Fig. 37) is most likely meant with these names¹⁰¹. The different versions of the place name in the copies of Ptolemy's book may all originate from the word composition "A-ngu Nagara", which means "A-ngu town". Today's village of A-ngu is located east of the Yangon River, but not directly at the seaside, like Anagagara on the maps according to Ptolemaios, but at the narrow Hmawwun Chaung (creek)¹⁰². During the flood disaster in 2008, however, A-ngu was actually lying on the northern edge of the flooded area (Fig. 38) and thus practically by the sea.

Aung-Thwin said the following on the issue of sedimentation in the (south-)eastern coastal region of Myanmar: "Besides, if the geographers are correct that the deltas of the major rivers of Mainland Southeast Asia have increased at the rate of several meters a year, the material remains for that alleged coastal genesis should exist on land today, not submerged in water."¹⁰³

The map by Nicolaus Germanus depicts the arrow-shaped Creek Point at the confluence of the Hmawwun Creek and the Yangon River very realistically. Creek Point, with its point in the south, makes up today half of the Chaungwa Township, north of the Hmawwun Creek¹⁰⁴.

About the settlement of Pandasa, which was also listed by Ptolemy, the German scholar Mannert wrote at the end of the 18th century the following: "From there over the eastern arm of the Ava [river], which Ptolemy locates as the newer maps do, to Pandosa at the Pegu river, in today's kingdom of Mien, which is an unknown territory to us."¹⁰⁵

Pandasa on the river Doruis, depicted on the drawn maps¹⁰⁶, must refer to today's Pazundaung Township, which makes up the South-eastern part of Yangon. Pazundaung Township is located, more precisely speaking, on the Pazundaung Creek. This is a small stream that empties into the confluence of the rivers Pegu and Yangon at Pegu Point.

The city of Yangon itself was called Dagon until the 18th century, and the Yangon River is also known under the name Hlaing River. The centre of the city was originally established at the confluence of the Yangon River to the west and south and the Pazundaung Creek to the east. The areas surrounding Pazundaung Creek have high concentrations of Burmese Indians today. At least since the colonial period, many Indians speaking the native language Telugu have been living and working in this part of the city:

¹⁰⁰Ptolemaios, 2. Teilband, p. 723.

¹⁰¹There is also the spelling Ah Ngu, as for example on the official map of the Kyauktan Township on the webpage http://themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/Tsp_Map_VL_Kyauktan_-_Yangon_MIMU154v04_03May2016_A1.pdf (10/28/2018). Kyauktan is located opposite of A-ngu, on the other side of the Hmawwun Creek. A ferry crosses the creek between A-ngu and Kyauktan. In 2011, Buddha images and three gold coins were found at construction works on one road in Kyauktan. These artefacts are believed to originate from the Bagan era. A brief newspaper report on it can be found at <https://www.mmmtimes.com/national-news/yangon/1711-buddha-images-jewellery-unearthed-in-kyauktan.html> (10/28/2018).

¹⁰²See the map NE 47-13 from the U.S. Army Map Service.

¹⁰³Aung-Thwin, p. 302.

¹⁰⁴A map of the village tract of Yangon Region can be found at http://themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/Region_Map_VT_and_VL_Yangon_MIMU1236v01_01Aug2016_36x60_inchEng.pdf (10/28/2018).

¹⁰⁵Mannert, p. 268 in a German translation. Mannert probably meant with Mien the realm of Rmen, the country of the Mon.

¹⁰⁶The translation from Ptolemaios, p. 729 indicates that this settlement is listed in most manuscript texts of Ptolemy's book under the name Panama.

As the city expanded within a century to more than twenty times the size envisaged in Fraser's town plan, pockets of immigrant settlements which could be identified with major ethno-linguistic groups developed in the suburbs. There were [...] Telegus generally in and around the waterfront and the factories and mills in Pazundaung [...]"¹⁰⁷

Telegu has been spoken since ancient times in parts of Andhra Pradesh in India. As another cultural import from India in Pazungdaung one can see several Hindu Temples, including the Maha Vishnu Temple. In fact, the relation of the Telegu-speaking people and their specific culture to Myanmar seems to be very old. The so-called Kadamba script of Telegu-Kannada in India is even considered to be the source of the Pyū script¹⁰⁸. Some known scholars assume that it originated from the Andhra script¹⁰⁹. The word *talingana* was originally supposed to designate Kalinga as the region of origin of Indian ships' crews, in Myanmar¹¹⁰. Over the centuries it has probably become a name for the whole of Lower Myanmar (Ussā Paikū) and all its inhabitants, called *Talaing*¹¹¹. Aung-Thwin wrote: "Tanluiñ is a reference to people living in Lower Burma in general". From early beginnings with Talingu fisherman, who came to the coasts of today's Myanmar, could become an Indian-influenced kingdom called Tanluin much later, whose inhabitants, however, consisted mainly of native population groups such as the Mon. The Indianisation of the Pyū, Burmese and Mon certainly took place similarly to the cultures of Iron Age Europe, with its Graecisation of ethnic groups such as the Romans and Celts. The European ethnic groups absorbed Greek influences to varying degrees. The Romans, for example, adapted the cultural achievements of the Greeks and tried to improve them for their own needs. According to tradition, the inhabitants of ancient Marseille on the Mediterranean Sea already consisted at an early time of a mixture of Celts and immigrated Greeks.

It is theoretically imaginable that in today's Yangon an Indian trading centre existed in the Iron Age, to which Indian travellers could actually have brought relics of the historical Buddha. However, it might be similar to the beginnings of Jamestown, which was founded by the British in the early 17th century CE on the east coast of today's USA. As with this modest trading station, one cannot assume that there will be one day found magnificent artefacts that will archaeologically proof Yangon's grand prehistory. A reliquary of the Buddha in the western district of Dagon of today's city of Yangon might have been well known beyond the region in the 1st century CE. But this will not have been so relevant for most travelling salesmen from the west, to be also depicted on a map. The impressive Shwedagon pagoda of today did not stand at that time either. It goes back in its present form to the glorious times of the 15th century CE in Lower Myanmar. In the first century of our era, Vishnuism was certainly the predominant imported weltanschauung, as artefacts found in Beikthano and Sri Ksetra attest. Presumably, Buddhist influences from eastern India started to become stronger and stronger only in the 2nd century CE to finally dominate the country, which is today Myanmar, by the Middle Ages.

¹⁰⁷Tin Maung Maung Than in his article "Some Aspects of Indians in Rangoon", page 592 of the book by K.S. Sandhu and A. Mani (see bibliography).

¹⁰⁸Aung-Thwin, pp. 36/157/162.

¹⁰⁹Aung-Thwin, pp. 168/175.

¹¹⁰Majumdar called the influx "the Hindu colonisation of Lower Burma" (Majumdar, pp. 195/196).

¹¹¹Aung-Thwin, pp. 264-280 with the sections "The Talaing Question and Scholarship of the Nineteenth Century", "The Talaing Question in the Early Twentieth Century" and "The Evidence on the Talaing (Tanluiñ) people in Early Sources". See also Berliet, pp. 52/53 with regard to Cooper, W.G.: "The Origin of the Talaings", In: *JBR*, vol. III, part 1, pp. 1-11, 1913.

The Seros River



Fig. 39: The Seros River with the towns of Agimoitha in the west and Tomara in the east (British Museum)



Fig. 40: The Sittaung/Sittoung River with the villages of Hmonkadon in the west and Thaungsuzu in the east (Mapbox and Mapcarta 2018)

The Seros River (Fig. 39) is probably the Sittaung/Sittoung (Fig. 40), formerly Sittang or (British) Tsit-toung, which flows into the Gulf of Martaban¹¹². As far as the ancient history of the country is concerned, the Sittang River has not attracted any archaeological attention due to any archaeological finds. Over the centuries it was navigable only a short distance upstream and was mainly used

¹¹² An interesting figurative decoration on the world map according to Ptolemy in Burney MS 111 (folio 106 right) is the placement of the zodiac signs in the "Great Gulf". This feature aptly illustrates the importance attached to stellar constellations in ancient seafaring.

for the transport of tree trunks downstream to the sea.

Seen from the position on the map and also by name similarity, Agimoitha could be a precursor of the ancient Hangsavati (Thai) or Hanthawati. According to the chronicles, this town was founded only in the Middle Ages. In Mon language it is called Hongswatui, which is phonetically quite close to the word Agimoitha. In Pali, it was called Haṃsāvātī, and all these names mean “The city of Hanga”, the goose. Even later the place was more commonly known as Pegu¹¹³ and is called usually Bago today.

The settlement of Sipiberis in Ptolemy’s listing is located more northerly on the Seros River, lying on the right bank of the river. Interestingly, in one mere text manuscript, it is called Sittiberis¹¹⁴. A possible reference to the current river name Sittaung, where Sittiberis would indeed have been situated. Nowadays, Sittaung (Old) Town at the bridge over the Sittang and near the mouth of the river is known as the town with the same name as this stream. However, it is lying on the left bank of the river and at 17° 27' north latitude and 96° 53' east longitude, and therefore not on a position even near to Sittiberis. It remains to be noted that the word component *beri* of Sittiberis is also to be found in the place name Rhingiberi¹¹⁵ from Ptolemy’s description of Further India.



Fig. 41: The town Rhandamarkota, having nard. It is situated on the Seros River and west of the Semanthinon mountains and the Land of the Sinai (British Museum)

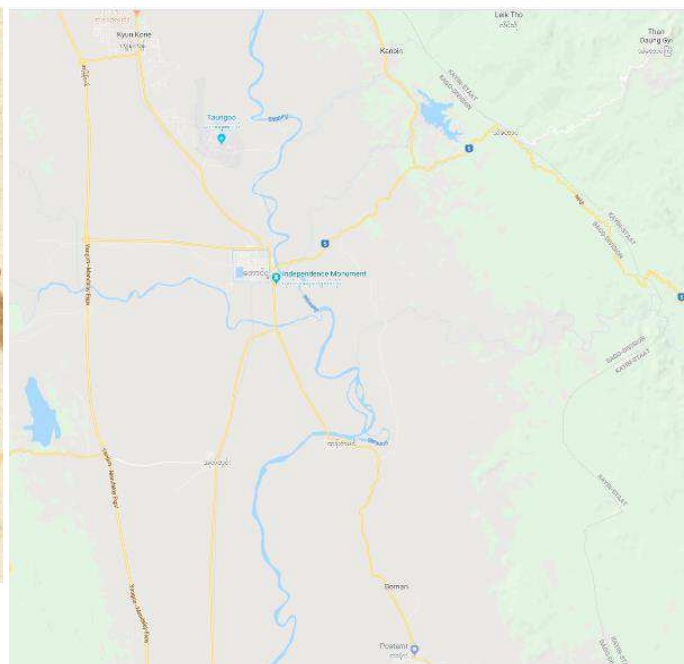


Fig. 42: The town of Bhamo on the Sittaung River with the new Bhamo in the north and the old Bhamo in the south. Bhamo is situated west of the Bwihikho/Dawparkho mountain range (Google Maps 2018)

Rhandamarta/Rhandamarkotta (Fig. 41), according to Ptolemy lying at the upper reaches of the Seros River, is most probably a Western name for Ketumati, today's Bhamo (Fig. 42), lying at the

¹¹³Bago city, also called Paigu in Burmese, is located a little to the left (thus to the west) of the map-cutout (Fig. 40) and therefore not depicted here.

¹¹⁴Ptolemaios, 2. Teilband, p. 729.

¹¹⁵It is difficult to determine the linguistic origin of the word *beri*. South India with Telugu has some trading castes existing since antiquity, one with the name Beri Chetti. Possibly their members also founded some trading stations in ancient Myanmar.

upper reaches of the Sittang River. In Ptolemy's book, the city is also found in his quite short list of important cities of Further India¹¹⁶. In this text section is also the information provided, that the longest day in Rhandamarkotta has approximately 13 5/6 hours, in another text copy 13 3/4 hours. In comparison, in 2018 the city of Toungoo had the longest day length on 21 June with 13:14 hours¹¹⁷.

The Burmese title of the "Chronicle of Early Toungoo Dynasty" is Ketumadi Yazawin. Ketumati, which has its name from the Pali language, was founded as a city only in the 16th century, but this could have been a re-foundation. According to tradition, Ketumati itself was a re-foundation of Toungoo, which means "Hill's Spur", which in turn is said to have been already founded in the 13th century CE. The new city of Taungoo is called Kaytumadi today, as well as Ketumadi. In the 1st century CE, Ketumati was known in India from Buddhist scriptures as the future name of the city of Benares and not as the name of an already existing city.

According to Ptolemaios, spikenard was available in Randamarta. Indian spikenard, *valeriana jatamansi*, is actually said to be found in the Shan Highland and is an endangered plant species today. The designation Semantins montes (Latin) east of Randamarcota (Latin) may refer to the Shan Highland. The Semanthinai (Greek) would, therefore, be the Shan or T'ai, that means Tai Shan people. And what's more, *Sam* is one of the other names for the Shan.

The Dawparkho/Bwihikho mountain range could be the western part of the Semanthinon mountains of Ptolemy. Than Daung Gyi is a small town in this mountainous region and does not lie far east from Toungoo. A very well-known local legend of the Kayin people of Thandaung Gyi town (Fig. 42), which is often told to tourists, talks about a local prince in mythical times, named Saw Thaw oh Khwa. He is said to have married one of the daughters of the "king of the sea", which was named Naw Bu Baw. One day the prince went to the eastern mountains to repulse invading enemies but died in battle. It is said that his wife Naw Bu Baw was blamed for his death since she was thought to be a sorceress. Therefore, she was executed as an alien witch at one mountain, a place which is still a landmark and has become a tourist sight today. It is also reported that the "king of the sea" sent a flood across the land to take revenge for the killing of his daughter.

On the basis of this story, one can speculate whether there really might have been friendly contacts between the hill tribe of the Kayin/Karen, living in the region, and a kingdom on the coast, at a prehistoric time. And whether a memory of a flood disaster that started on the coast could also have survived in oral tradition. Perhaps the reported invasion in the eastern mountains was even undertaken by Tai-Shan people?¹¹⁸ In order to clarify these emerging questions, one can turn again to the traditional chronicles. Thamoddarit¹¹⁹ (pronounced [θəmɔʊʔdəiʔ]) is regarded as the legendary founder of the Pagan Dynasty at the beginning of the 2nd century CE. In Pali, his name was Samuddaraj¹²⁰, which literally translated means "king of the sea". He might well have

¹¹⁶Ptolemaios, 27.9.

¹¹⁷<http://www.sunrise-and-sunset.com/en/sun/myanmar/taungoo/2018/june> (09/24/2018). It must also be taken into account, that the duration of a Roman hour depended on the season of the year. At the latitude of the Mediterranean, it varied from 45 minutes in winter to 75 minutes in summer.

¹¹⁸About Thamoddarit see also Hudson, pp. 25/26.

¹¹⁹There is an article in Burmese language titled "Thamudriz Min, Samuddaraj' Man'", by Dr. Yi Yi in the magazine Shumawa, Vol. 29, No. 347, pp. 115-118 from April 1976. This article uses the main historical sources and can be found online at http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs20/Yi_Yi-1976-Thamudriz_Min-bu-red.pdf (11/03/2018).

¹²⁰Samudda means "ocean" or denotes simply a large body of water. In Sri Lanka, for example, in the Middle Ages the king Parakrama had the so-called Parakrama samudraya built, the "sea of Parakrama". It's a giant tank, which today still provides water for agriculture.

owed his name to the ambition of the Pyu people to have control over water flows. If one considers the sophisticated irrigation systems of Sri Ksetra and Beikthano¹²¹, the Pyū succeeded at least in this limited area. According to written tradition, Thamoddarit is said to have married his daughter Thiri Sanda Dewi to the brave Pyusawhti¹²² or Pyuminhti. Alone because of these similarities in the traditions mentioned, there could be a connection between the Kayin legend and the Thamoddarit legend. Moreover, already at the end of the 19th century, the British Captain C. J. F. S. F. Forbes expressed the following view about the legendary history of the ancient dynasty of Pagan:

THAMOODARIT was succeeded by his son-in-law Pyoomindee, thus uniting the kindred royal lines of Tagoung and Prome. The reign of the third King of this dynasty is signalized by an invasion of 'the Chinese' according to the Native history. The invaders were completely defeated at Kawthanbee. Although styled Chinese it is more probable they were the Shans of Yunan. At this time the Chinese had not conquered the province of Yunan, which was possessed by the Shan race. The Chinese were, however, about this period, A. D. 161— 241, extending their empire southward of the Yangtsekiang, and their attacks on the Shan kingdom of Yunan may have forced the latter to endeavour to trespass in turn on their Burman neighbours.¹²³

In fact, both the region east of the so-called Seros River, on the maps according to Ptolemy, and the region east of the Sittang/Sittoung River, are marked by a border. While in the case of the Seros River, there was drawn a sharp boundary to the region of the so-called Senai, in the case of the Sittang River this border is actually more a language border. Settlement areas of the Shan with their language, but also the Shan State of Myanmar, are located east of the Sittang River today, as already mentioned in the introduction.

In conclusion to this section, it can be stated that in this study the settlements on the Seros River have the least similar names compared to documented ancient place names in Myanmar. This could indicate, for example, that there was no continuity of settlement at these sites from the times of Ptolemaios of Alexandria in the 2nd century CE until modern times. Or that after the immigration and takeover by the ethnic group of the Burmese, former names of earlier settlements, occupied by other ethnic groups, were not adopted. For this possible cause of the name mismatches, the Kayin people, known in the West as Karen, and the Shan, and the Mon on the lower reaches of the Sittang, could have been these indigenous people.

¹²¹See especially the section "Water control and early urbanism at Beikthano and Sri Ksetra" in Stargardt's article.

¹²²Pyusawhti is said to have had his name because he was raised by two "old Pyu". The most accurate Romanized transliteration of his name is certainly Pyū So Thīḥ (Griffiths, p. 54). He later changed his name to Pyū Mañḥ Thīḥ. According to the Glass Palace Chronicle, he reigned from 167-242 CE (Tin and Luce, p. 40), that means after the times of Ptolemy of Alexandria.

¹²³Forbes, p. 14.

3 The Country of the Sinai

The Aspitharas River



Fig. 43: The towns of Aspithra and Akathra on the eastern bank of the Aspitharas River (British Museum)

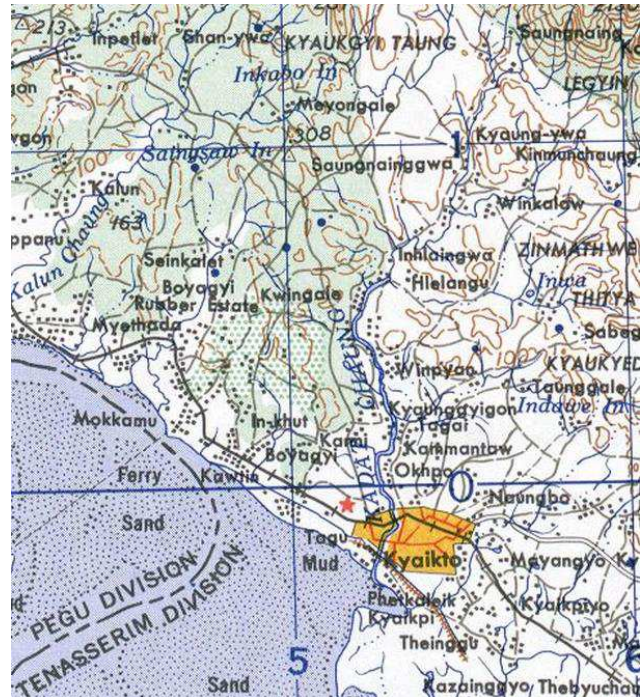


Fig. 44: The villages Phetkalaik und Inhlaingwa on the Kadat River (U.S. Army Map Service, NE 47-9 "Pegu")

The name Sán Chay, used for one specific Tai-speaking group in north-eastern Vietnam¹²⁴, is one of the many designations for the Shan. As already emphasised in the introduction, the country of the Sinai was therefore likely a region which was under the control of Tai Shan peoples, at least in the 1st and 2nd century CE. As Aung-Thwin has pointed out in his book, such a predominance by one ethnic group in ancient Myanmar did not necessarily mean, that heterogeneous ethnic groups did not all have their residences in one and the same polity. For example, as we know from written sources, both Pyū and Mon individuals lived and worked in the medieval Burmese kingdom as respected members of society. Nation states of modern western style, as Aung-Thwin conclusively pointed out, were no concept which was applied in the territory of ancient Myanmar. Still today there are population shares of the Shan in the Kayah State at the headwaters of the Salween River.

As Ptolemaios wrote, the towns of Akathra and Aspithra (Fig. 43) were lying in the interior of the country of the Sinai¹²⁵. He located Aspithra near the mouth of the Aspitharas River¹²⁶. The place names Aspithra and Phetkalaik (Fig. 44) are similar in the syllables *pit* and *phet*. The village of Kyaik Pi¹²⁷, also adjacent to Kyaikto, has the syllable *pi* of its name in common with Aspithra.

¹²⁴*Historical Dictionary of the Peoples of the Southeast Asian Massif*, by Jean Michaud, Margaret Byrne Swain, Meenaxi Barkataki-Ruscheweyh, pp. 334-336, London 2016.

¹²⁵Ptolemaios, 2. Teilband, 7.3.5.

¹²⁶Ptolemaios, 2. Teilband, 7.3.2.

¹²⁷This separate spelling of the village name can also be found on the official map of the Kyaikto Township at

Phetkailaik and Kyaikpi are small, insignificant villages on the mouth of the Kadat River today. They are both located close to the more important town of Kyaiktiyo in the Kyaikto Township.



Fig. 45: The towns of Aspithra and Arhatra on the eastern bank of the Aspitharis River (National Library of Poland)



Fig. 46: The towns of Kyaiktiyo and the village and the Kadat River (Mapbox and Mapcarta 2018)

If one follows the river bends of the stream Kadat Chaung/Kadatchaung on the modern map (Fig. 44), according to the course of the Aspithara (Aspithras) River, the town of Akathra (Akadra) must have been located in the area of today's village Inhlaingwa. In the place name Akadra itself, or Akathra, which is more common in manuscripts, one can recognize echoes of the river name Kadat. Ptolemaios wrote in his book that the sources of the river Aspithras lie in the south-eastern parts of the Semanthinon Mountains¹²⁸(Fig. 45). In comparison, the sources of the Kadat River are located in a mountainous region (Fig. 46), adjacent to the present southern Shan Highland. Not far from the springs is situated the famous Kyaiktiyo Pagoda, also known as Golden Rock, on top of the Kyaiktiyo hill. Legend tells about a boat that was used to transport the Golden Rock from the sea to the hills in ancient times. A possible indication, that the Kadat Chaung was already used as a waterway in antiquity. The hills in the region of the Golden Rock are also known as Kelasa hills, lying on the Paung-laung ridge of the Eastern Yoma mountains.

http://themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/Tsp_Map_VL_Kyaikto_-_Mon_MIMU154v04_03May2016_A1.pdf (11/04/2018).

¹²⁸Ptolemaios, 2. Teilband, 7.3.2.

The Ambastos River

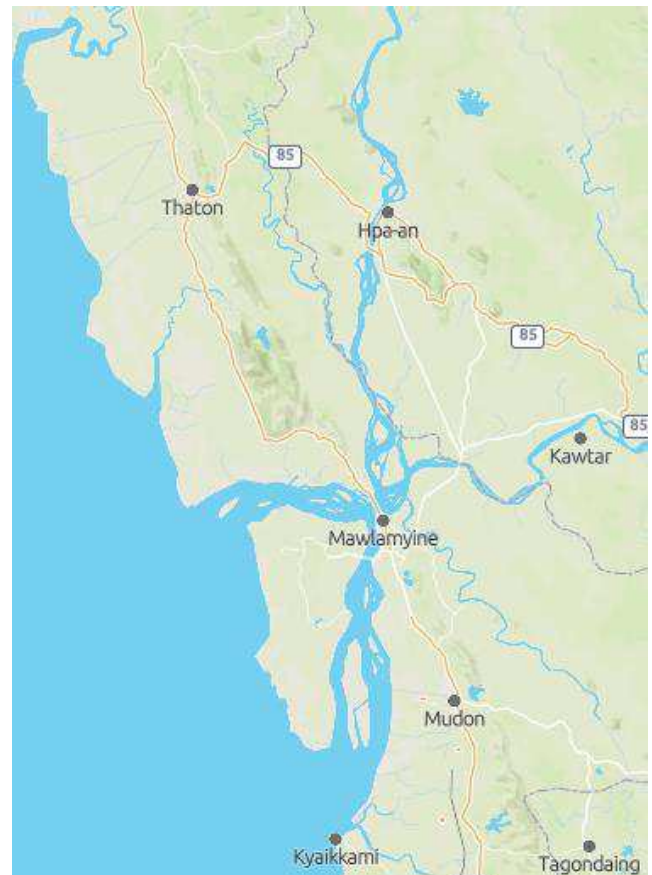


Fig. 47 (top left): The Ambastos River with the towns of Bramma and Rhabana (British Museum)



Fig. 48 (top right): Coastal towns from Kyaikto over Thaton to Mudon and the Salouen River. In dark blue colour the flooded areas due to the cyclone Nargis in May 2008 (detail of Wikipedia map based on OpenStreetMap)

Fig. 49 (right): The Salween River with towns from Thaton to Mudon and Kyaikkami (Mapbox and Mapcarta 2018)



The toponym Bramma on the Burney map (Fig. 47) or Bramina on the map by Nicolaus Germanus may be a western rendering of the word Rāmañña. A Latin edition of Ptolemy's book from the 16th century has the short spelling Brāma¹²⁹. Foreign merchants will have mistakenly confused the word "Rāmañña" with the widely known Indian word "Brahma". The very important Indian god Brahma and also the caste of the Brahmins are still today world-famous terms. Rāmañña as a toponym will have been originally supposed to refer to a settlement of the Rmeñ, that means the ethnic group of the Mon, located on the coast in the (Tai) Shan dominion. The acceptance of this statement would not be a rebuttal of Aung-Thwin's thesis that before the beginning of the second millennium there existed no Rāmaññadesa, that means a country named Rāmañña. The town name Rāmañña would only have emphasised the fact, that one ethnic group dominated this place in antiquity. At least this ancient little coastal town called Rāmañña could have been the nucleus of the medieval country Rāmaññadesa. A literary exaggeration of the meaning of the term Rāmaññadesa related to Myanmar, on the other hand, took place at a very late stage. This was done mainly out of a desire to create a nation-state for the Mon people. Probably for the first time at the foundation of a Mon kingdom in the 15th century CE. Later, at the beginning of the 19th century CE, it seemed useful for the British rulers to demonstrate the supposedly glorious past of the ancestors to the Mon people. This incitement was done, in order to weaken the opponent of the British, the Burmese kingdom. The concept called "divide and rule" was a particularly successful policy pattern of the British colonial power in the 19th century CE. Centuries after the described magnificence of the Mon kingdom, it anyway was difficult to prove otherwise. Only modern archaeology can either profoundly revise such retrospective images of history, or at least justifiably question them. The idea of using the soil as a kind of history book was only born in modern times.

As a consequence of all these facts, the glorious royal city of Thaton, which in prehistoric times is said to have ruled over Rāmaññadesa, cannot be more than a flattering myth, at least regarding the 1st and 2nd century CE. When comparing the map from Burney MS 111 with modern maps having Thaton on it, however, one can state that the ancient Bramma polis and the medieval city of Thaton were roughly situated on the same geographical position. This match becomes particularly obvious when a map of the flooded area, being a result of the cyclone Nargis in 2008, is used for the comparison (Fig. 48). The town of Bramma was situated on a small bay, just as Thaton at the time of the flood disaster. Already Aung-Thwin has suggested in his book, that Thaton may have been closer to the sea in earlier times.

On the map from the Burney manuscript, the river name Ambastos is probably a name for the Thanlwen, the Salween river. Parts of the word Ambastos can be found in the name of the historically interesting settlement of Sampanago. The old name of Sampanago is Campānāga, meaning "City of Serpents". The old city is located at the confluence of the rivers Thanlwein and Dontami. Moore and San Win concluded:

As these details highlight, Sampanago was part of a vital nexus near to egress into the bay. The area was fertile, and not being directly on the tip of the landmass. "Kin Ywa" or revenue village, 3 kilometres upriver from the walled site, was probably a fortified way station for goods prior to shipment by sea or overland.¹³⁰

The Greek map furthermore shows the Thinai metropolis (Fig. 47), lying at a northern position at

¹²⁹On page 123 of *Geographicae Enarrationis Libri Octo*, by Michael Servetus, Lyon 1535.

¹³⁰Moore 2014, p. 219.

the river Ambastos. In most text manuscripts, this capital city is called Sinai. In comparison, Sampanago is not situated so far upstream and is also far from being a capital. In contrast, Hpa-an (Fig. 49), north of Sampanago, is today actually the capital of the Karen (Kayin) State in Myanmar. It is sometimes also spelt Pa-An and pronounced Pah-Ann and is 23 kilometres away from Sampanago along the Thanlwin¹³¹.

The town name Rhabana is very probably a Graecicised form of Rammāvatī. The name of the legendary Rammāvatī (Pali) will originally have meant Kawparan, today's Mudon, although it is usually associated with Mawlamyaing¹³². However, the name could also have been shifted after Mawlamyaing had overtaken the importance of Kawparan as a trading place. Kawparan is merely a village in the township of Mudon (Fig. 49) which, like Rhabana, is situated near an inlet and south of an important river. Hudson refers to Kawparan as "Settlement with early urban / Pyu characteristics, from survey or archaeological literature". Admittedly, Martaban has a greater name similarity with Rhabana. However, Martaban is located north and west of the Salween River, while Rhabana lies south of the charted Ambastos River. Moreover, the name Martaban has also become established, although the city's name is actually Muttama.

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²Moore, 2014 p. 235.

The Kouthiaris River



Fig. 50 (top left): The river basin of the Chotiaris River and Senns River. Off the coast three islands (National Library of Poland)

Fig. 51 (bottom): The river basin of the Kouthiaris River in the south, connected to the Sainos River in the north (British Museum)

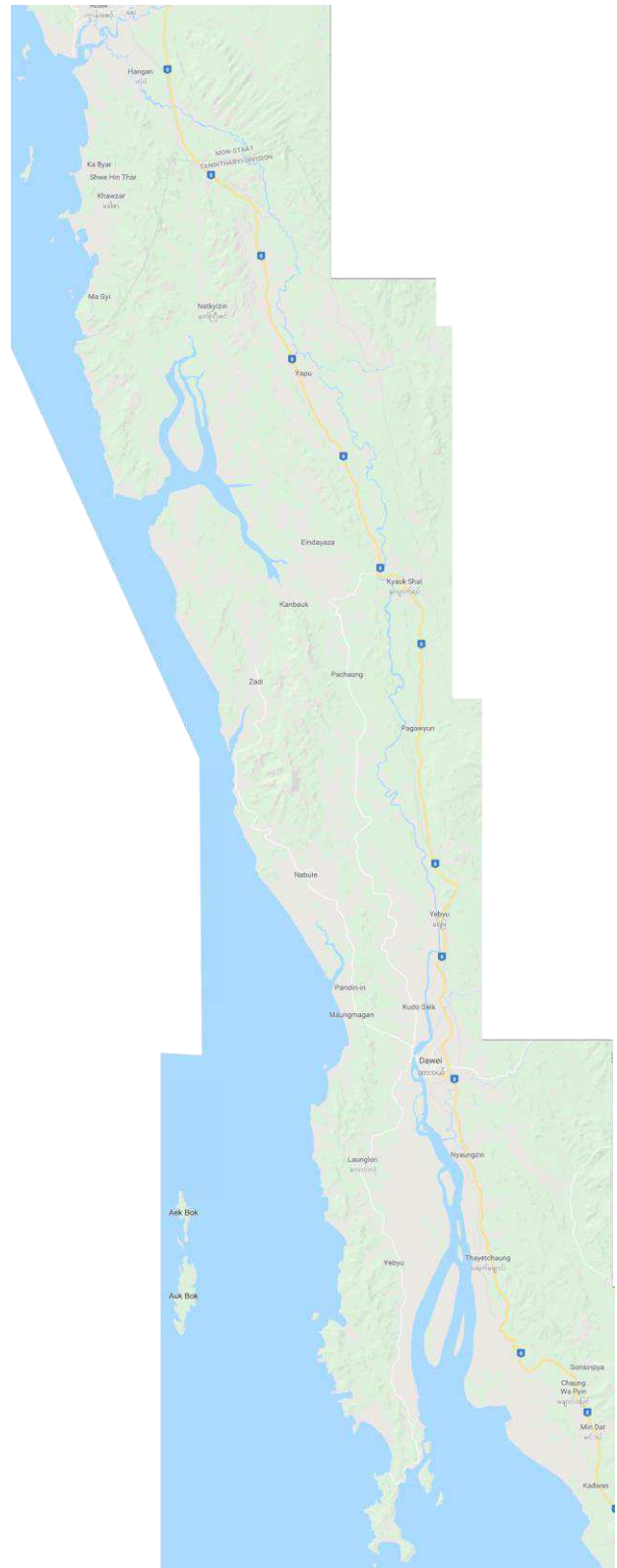


Fig. 52 (top right): The river basin of the Tavoy River and its meeting in the north with the Ye River (Google Maps 2018)

Next, broadly speaking, the graphic representation of today's Dawei Peninsula and its northern continuation (Fig. 52) on maps, shall be examined. More specifically, the area of the Tavoy River from its southern to its northern part.

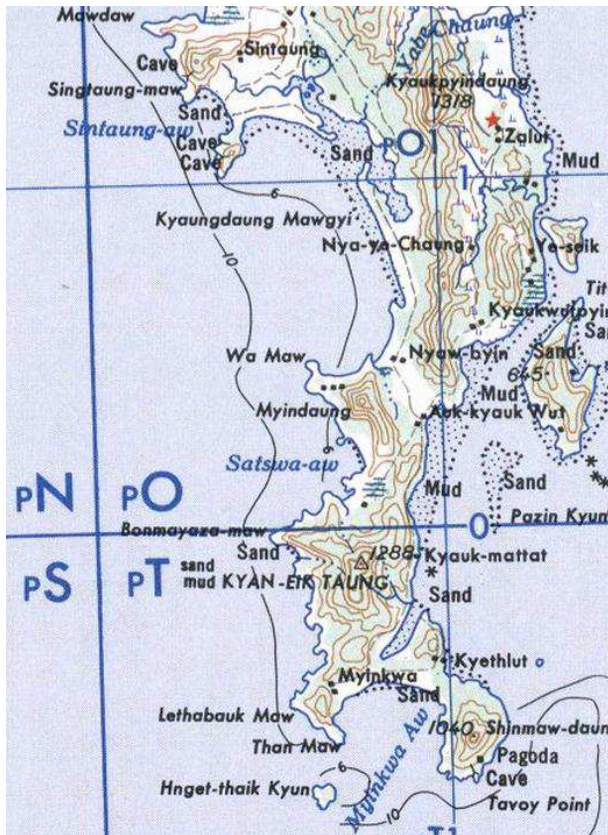


Fig. 53: The southernmost part of the Dawei Peninsula with the headland of Sintaung-maw (U.S. Army Map Service, ND 47-10 "Palauk")

The Satoru Headland on the old map (Fig. 50) certainly denotes the headland Sintaung-maw with the village Sintaung (Fig. 53). Sinaru Bay (Fig. 51) can, therefore, be identified with Sintaung-aw, but extending beyond the present bay of Kyaungdaung Mawgyi. Greeks will have mistakenly associated the headland's name Sinaru with "satyr", because of the name similarity, and given it thus the meaning of "Cape of the Satyrs". And, what is more, there are also caves at the Sintaung-maw Headland and the Sintaung-aw Bay. According to Greek-Roman ideas, the satyr-like god Pan dwelt in such a place.

The name Kokkoranagara refers to a town called *Kokko Ra Nagara*. In the Burmese part of Myanmar, for example, there is a village called Kokkokhala, located in Upper Myanmar, on the Samon River. Objects were found there, belonging to the Bronze Age. South of it lies Kokkogon, also on the Salmon River, where also prehistoric finds were made. And Kokkogwa, a village south of the city wall of the ancient town of Beikthano, also in Upper Myanmar. As mentioned before, one of the

19 founding villages of Bagan was Kokko, today named Kote-koo. All these settlements with the initial word *kokko*, are located in the former domain of the Pyū. From a linguistic point of view alone, Ptolemy's Kokkoranagara is evidence of the influence by Pyū language and culture.

As is known, King Aniruddha of Bagan brought the Tavoy area under his control in the middle of the 11th century CE. Aniruddha's conquests covered almost all of present-day Myanmar and stretched across the north, east, west and Lower Burma. From Arakan to Bassein, Thaton, Tavoy and south to Mergui he left so-called votive style tablets in Old Burmese and Mon language. As Aung-Thwin puts it "that they cover the extent of the kingdom". It is possible, that Aniruddha claimed the same territories, that the Pyū once had either ruled or at least cultivated, as a Burmese and thus heir of the former Pyū realm. A famous successor to him, King Kyanzittha, appointed two governors to administer the province of Tavoy¹³³. But as said above, this was perhaps the reoccupation by a Tibeto-Burmese people, with a language related to the Pyū language.

An ancient city in the Tavoy district of the Tanintharyi Region¹³⁴ called Atkalienaung, which is mentioned in written sources, could not be located until today. On the Latin map by Nicolaus Germanus the so-called capital of Sine/Thine was placed in the deep south-east (Fig. 50). In this case, Thine would have been located near Tavoy, as opposed to charts like the one from Burney MS 111

¹³³Aung-Thwin, pp. 245/246.

¹³⁴In the Thai language, the region is known as "Tanao Si", pronounced [təna:w sɯː].

and also the coordinates according to Ptolemy. Then Thine actually could have meant Atkalienaung. Oral traditions make Atkalienaung one of the oldest cities in the region and agree to date its fall to the year 715 CE, attributing it to the Shan¹³⁵. Which again means, that this region was also a Shan domain, at least temporarily. Aung-Thwin already mentioned the evidence for the presence of Mon people in the Burmese kingdom. The presence of Pyū people in an ancient eastern Shan kingdom is equally imaginable. Nationalism of European character will indeed not have been a guideline of ancient kingdoms in Myanmar. Such thinking would not have been a sensible concept, regarding alone the considerable number of different ethnic groups in the country. A nationalistic oppression of ethnic groups would certainly have been detrimental for the permanence of these multi-ethnic realms.

The Sagara of Ptolemy's text is obviously Thagara, pronounced Sagara, which lies 11 km north of Tavoy. Taking the reference by Ptolemy into account, Thagara would actually be older than the founding legend suggests, since this has the 8th century CE as the founding period. At any rate, is Thagara known locally as Myohaung, that means "old city"¹³⁶. Hudson calls Thagara a settlement with early urban / Pyu characteristics, from survey or archaeological literature¹³⁷. However, no Pyū inscriptions have been found in Thagara yet¹³⁸. In addition, objects from Thagara show influences from Upper Myanmar as well as from Sri Lanka, as Moore states¹³⁹.

The town name Sagara appears in the text passage 7,3,5 of the Codex Vaticanus Graecus 191, called manuscript X by Stückelberger¹⁴⁰. This textual version differs in various given positions and town names from the more prominent recension. According to the more common textual version, the town Sagara is called Sarata. On Nicolaus Germanus's map, the town is even labelled with the name Sarapa.

The river Kouthiaris, of which Ptolemaios wrote, that it flows into the Sinai river, can be identified as the Tavoy Chaung. The text of one manuscript has the name Kattiaris instead of the common Kutiaris¹⁴¹. By the Sinai River, is probably the Ye River meant. It is written that: "Around the Gulf of Sinai dwell the fish-eating Aithiopians"¹⁴². The area of Dawei is indeed still known for producing dried fish. Today the Tavoy Peninsula is one of the main regions of Myanmar for fish farming¹⁴³. The relationship of the region to fish seems to be very old, what can also be deduced from a legend, mentioned by Moore:

The founding story of many of these is woven into the founding story of Thagara involving a prince, Maung Nwa ('Mr. Bull') who becomes a hermit. From the union of the hermit and a *Nakoma* fish, the first dynasty of Thagara emerged.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁵Berliet, S. 232.

¹³⁶Moore, June 2011, p. 5.

¹³⁷Hudson, p. 175.

¹³⁸Moore 2011, p. 2.

¹³⁹Moore June 2011, p. 2.

¹⁴⁰Ptolemaios, 1. Teilband, p. 27.

¹⁴¹Ptolemaios, 2. Teilband, p. 733.

¹⁴²Translation McCrindle, p. 245.

¹⁴³See the map "Aquaculture" in Kraas, page 119.

¹⁴⁴Moore, June 2011, p. 23.

The Kathigara Berth

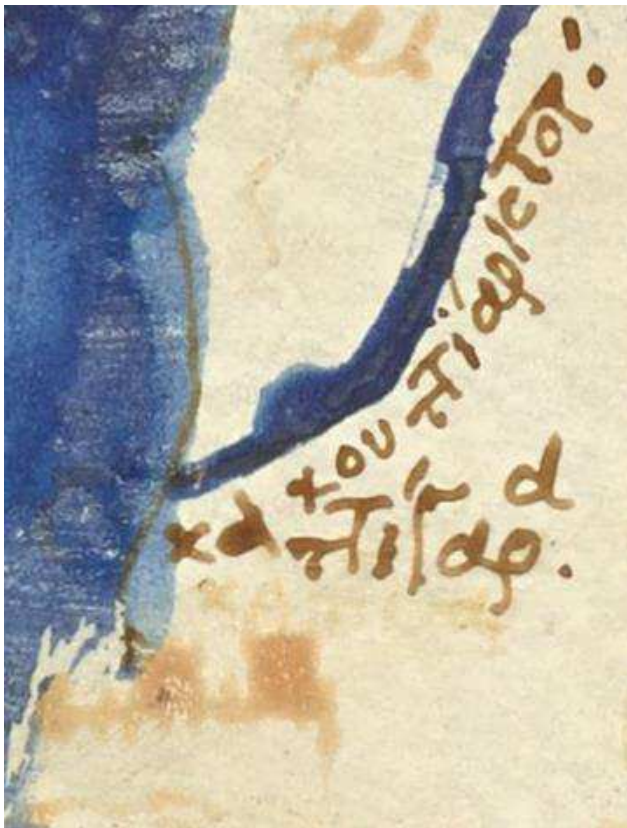


Fig. 54: Detail view of the drawing of the anchorage named Kathigara, situated at the mouth of the river Kouthiaris and opposite a peninsula (British Museum)

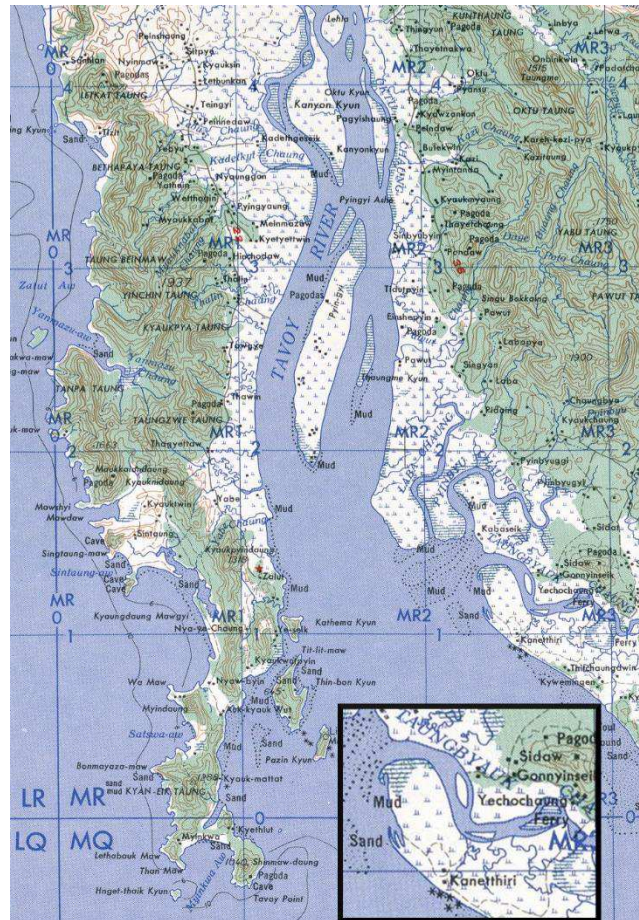


Fig. 55: Detail view of the fishing village Kanetthiri at the mouth of the Tavoy River and opposite the Tavoy Peninsula (U.S. Army Map Service, ND 47-10 "Palauk")

In Ptolemy's very short list of important cities in the land of the Sinai, the site of Kattigara is also mentioned as being their berth¹⁴⁵. Furthermore, according to the Alexandrian scholar, this place has the longest day before 12 ½ hours, „whereby the southern celestial pole rises above the horizon". In comparison, the provincial town of Dawei had the longest day in 2018 on 21 June, with 12:55 hours¹⁴⁶.

It can be inferred from several parallels, that the Kathigara berth, as it is drawn on the map from Burney MS 111 (Fig. 54), is to be found at the coastal strip of today's fishing village Kanetthiri (Fig. 55). First of all, the similarity of the names is high. Beside the name Kanetthiri, there are also the variants Kanatheri and Kanetthira¹⁴⁷. Secondly, Kanetthiri, like Kathigara, lies at the mouth of a narrow stream, which flows around a long, narrow strip of land. And thirdly, the nearby oblong and narrow land area in question has got three immediate offshore islands in its south-western part. Thus, both linguistic and topographical similarities speak for identifying Kanetthiri as Kathigara. As a hilly elevation in an otherwise flat environment, the place may have been a landmark in Roman

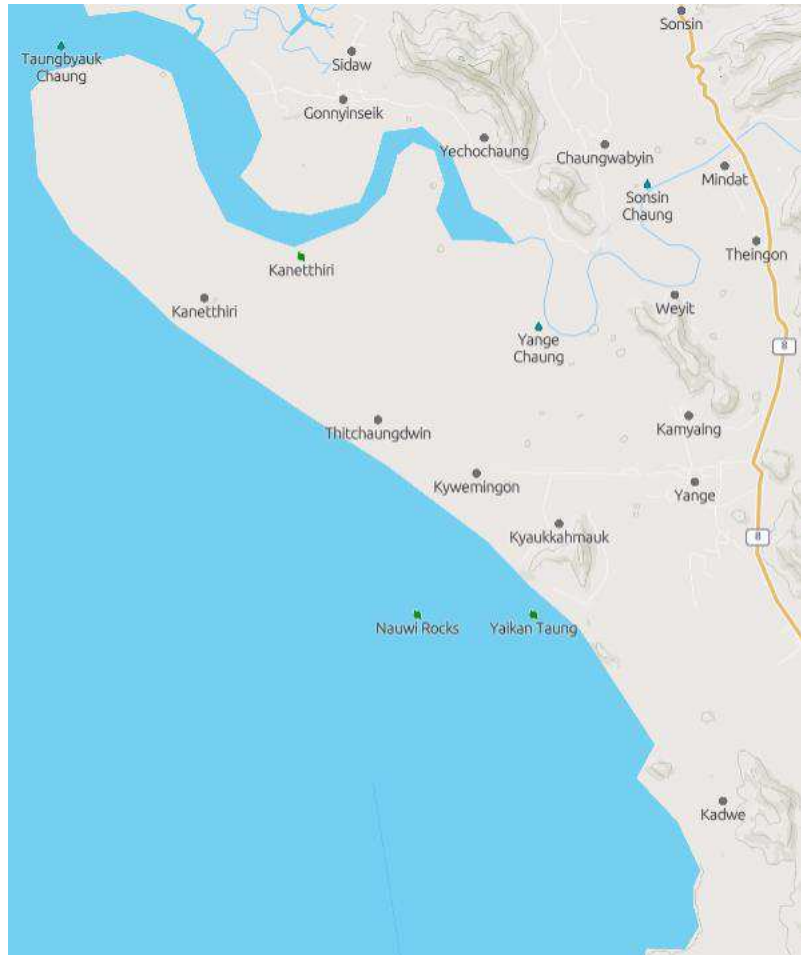
¹⁴⁵Ptolemaios, 7.3.3.

¹⁴⁶<http://www.sunrise-and-sunset.com/en/sun/myanmar/dawei/2018/june> (09/24/2018).

¹⁴⁷See for example [http://travelingluck.com/Asia/Myanmar/Burma+\(general\)/_1320828_Kanetthiri.html](http://travelingluck.com/Asia/Myanmar/Burma+(general)/_1320828_Kanetthiri.html) (11/13/2018).

times for entering the Tavoy River basin. The similarity between the place name Kanetthiri and the river name Kouthiaris in Ptolemy's geographical guide indicates that the naming was done by western navigators based on this characteristic. This could have been a result of the significance of this location in relation to the Tavoy River. The village of Kadwe (Fig. 56), situated further south on the coast and at a small cove, may also have been relevant to mariners.

Fig. 56: The Kanetthiri village, located at an altitude of 125 feet by the sea, and the Kanetthiri hill (green mark), with an altitude of 16 feet, lying on the Taungbyauk Chaung. In the south, the village of Kadwe (Mapbox and Mapcarta 2018)



In official records, Kadwe is also written as Katwe or Ka Twe. The word part *kat* is perhaps the part that this settlement contributed to the name Kathigara. While Kanetthiri with its sandbanks and river currents might have offered some difficulties as an anchorage in antiquity, Katwe may even have been riskier for ships, due to the nearby foul ground sand, despite its cove. Today Kanetthiri and Katwe are two of 39 rural tracts of the Thayetchaung Township in the Dawei District of the Tanithayi Division of Myanmar.

As already mentioned above, sailors from the west certainly shied away from the risk to sail further south and to take a route through an obscure island world and through the Straits of Malacca. Experienced skippers from the East will certainly have told stories of pirates, unknown tides and foreign languages. What is more, Mergui is also considered the "southernmost point of the Pagán kingdom", as Aung-Thwin writes¹⁴⁸. Even the rulers of the Pyū and the Burmese apparently avoided to enter territories beyond this place, let alone to bring them under their control. Thus, Kathigara on the antique maps is also the last mainland place named in the extreme south-east of the world, as it was known to Ptolemaios in the 2nd century CE. As early as 1797, Professor Mannert presumed that Indians on their way to the east, whether coming overland from Palimbothra (Patna), or by the sea along the coast of Arakan, brought their goods only up to the "staple market" Thina, being not so far away. The merchants would have firmly expected further delivery from there to China¹⁴⁹.

¹⁴⁸Aung-Thwin, p. 112.

¹⁴⁹Mannert, pp 274/275.

The Iabadiu Island

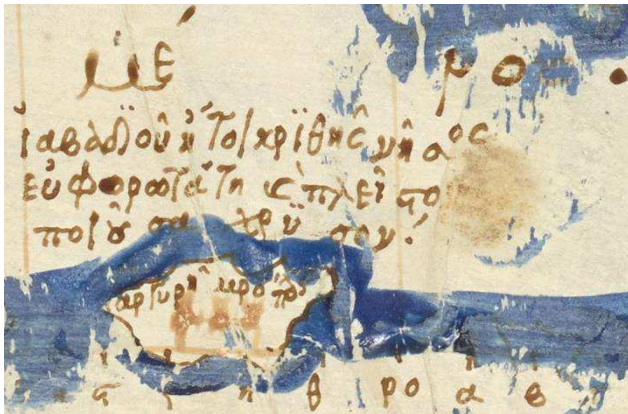


Fig. 57 (top left): Iabadiu Island (British Museum)

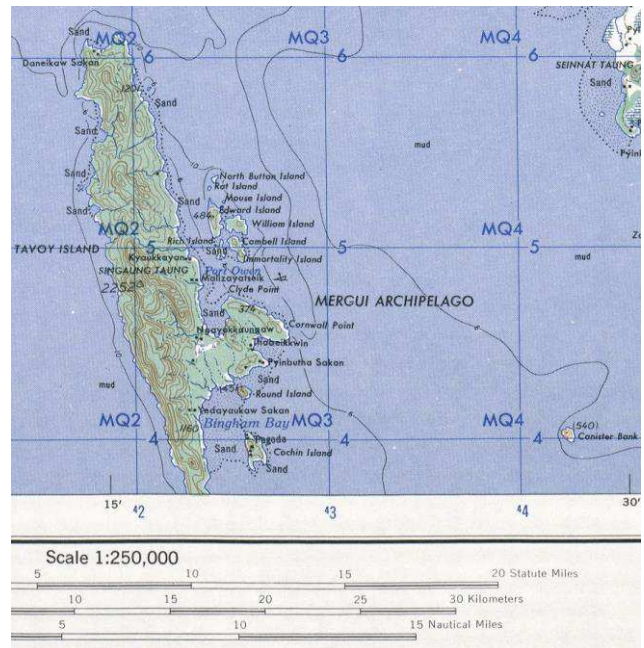


Fig. 58 (right): Tavoy Island (U.S. Army Map Service, ND 47-10 "Palauk")



Fig. 59 (top left): Drawing of Iabadiu Island, rotated by 90 degrees (British Museum)

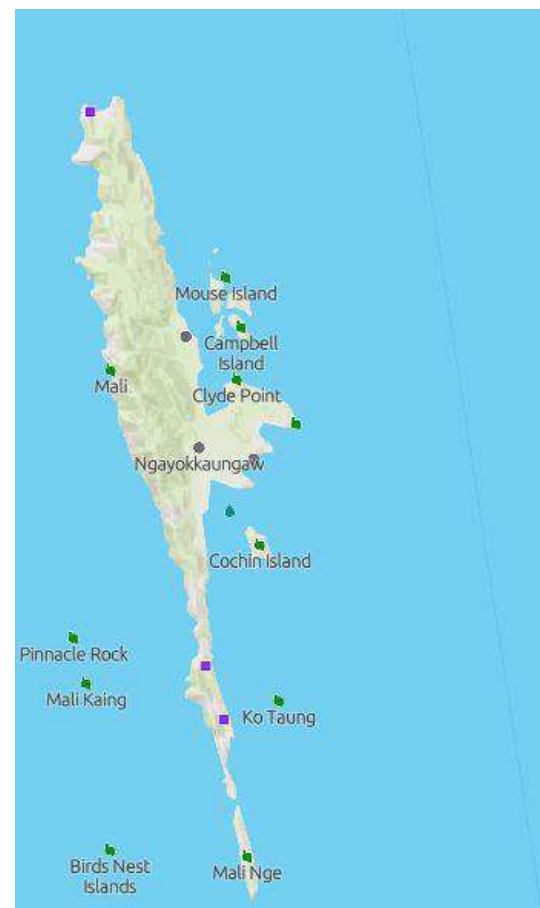


Fig. 60 (right): Dawei Island, also called Mali Kyun. To the right of it the shipping route as a thin dark blue line (Mapbox and Mapcarta 2018)

As the last land territory in this analysis of Ptolemy's listing of places in Further India, the Iabadiu Island (Fig. 57) shall be discussed. This island is most probably the former Tavoy Island/Dawei Island (Fig. 58), called Mali Kyun now. It is the northernmost large island of the Mergui or Tanasserim Archipelago. The similarity of the outlines of Iabadiu and Mali Kyun becomes most obvious when the drawing from Burney MS 111 is rotated by 90 degrees (Fig. 59).

The blue dashed line on the topographic map from Mapbox/Mapcarta stands for the shipping lane (Fig. 60), located in the east of the island. At the beginning of the 19th century, the Scottish hydrographer James Horsburgh mapped many seaways for the British East India company. He wrote about the Island: "There is a good harbour on the east side of Tavoy Island [...] a safe and good harbour, having an abundant supply of good water and wood. This port has received the name of Port Owen."¹⁵⁰

The general belief that the ancient name of the island Iabadiu came from Yavadvipa (Sanskrit), meaning "barley island"¹⁵¹, has its strongest advocate in Ptolemy himself. He wrote in his book that the name of the island means barley. Another assumption, saying that Iabadiu could have been a name for the Island of Java¹⁵² is erroneous for several reasons. Whether one had sailed from the Mergui archipelago or from the Gulf of Thailand to the south, one would have first reached the island of Sumatra before even catching sight of Java, and this only after many further sea miles. North of Iabadiu, however, there is no island as large as Sumatra charted on the old maps according to Ptolemy. Thankfully, Laurent Fries left us a map in the 16th century whose Latin title could be translated as "A New Map of the Region South-East of India". This map is a logical extension of the cartography by Ptolemy in a south-easterly direction. It was extended by the geographical knowledge made available at the beginning of the 16th century through the voyages of contemporary explorers. At the top left of the new, additional map, one can see the island of *ibadium*, already known to Ptolemaios of Alexandria and placed here in the so-called *Mare Indicum*. To the south and southeast of it can now be found a graphic representation of the Malay Archipelago, *Seylam* (Sumatra) and Iava Minor (Java)¹⁵³.

In general, the easternmost coordinates given by Ptolemy are most likely positions further away than any ever actually reached before his time. It was certainly also the intention of western skip-pers in antiquity to reach more distant places than ever before. An additional motivation for ship crews to continue the eastbound voyage was therefore undoubtedly the given information of big gold resources existing on the island of Iabadiu. Ptolemaios also wrote that the island was very fertile. The information of the island's fertility should probably also take away the fear of potential crews to starve on arrival. Especially in the Indian culture with its ancient Vedic hymns had *yava*, that means barley, a particularly great significance as one domestic grain. But, also in the ancient Jewish culture, more precisely in the Hebrew Bible, barley was considered high. There it symbolised the fertility of the Promised Land, as one of the so-called "Seven Species" of crops.

As a further promise of the Iabadiu Island, according to the Alexandrian Ptolemaios, there should even exist a capital at its western end, named Argyre or Argyrois¹⁵⁴, clearly derived from the Greek

¹⁵⁰Horsburgh, p. 31.

¹⁵¹Ptolemaios, 2. Teilband, p. 731.

¹⁵²As accepted in Ptolemaios, Teilband. 2, p. 731.

¹⁵³A digitised Image of the map from 2014 by the National Library Board Singapore can be downloaded at <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/printheritage/detail/59c9f0ea-d8fd-46f5-a4fc-5a4e87b1eb5d.aspx> (12/10/2018).

¹⁵⁴Ibid. The most important village on the island today seems to be Ngayokkaungaw. Ngayokkaung or Nga Youk Kuan

word for "silver". Indeed, the delivered information about this island is too good to be actually true. It is rather comparable to the promises of a travel brochure of today. But, also explorers of earlier centuries recruited people, in their case sailors, with such promises. Such promises to reach a Golden Country east of India on a trading voyage may also have caused several countries in Southeast Asia claiming to be this Golden Country today.¹⁵⁵ In fact, countries such as today's Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia including Java were worthwhile trade destinations in ancient times. However, this not necessarily and always due to existing gold resources or access to them in these countries. It was probably quite similar to the beginning of the colonial period in America when Europeans speculated on finding gold veins at every location. On the American continent, European explorers were often driven by their greed for gold and silver. In the overflowing desires of these men, the streets in the regions to be travelled were virtually paved with gold. This idea further stimulated the interest of the old continent in the colonization of distant countries.

Regarding the assessment of the corresponding conditions in ancient Southeast Asia, I would like to join Nicolas Revire's appeal at this point:

[...] should we not give more credence to the old hypothesis that the original 'Golden Land'—assuming that it really existed— included a large area of Southeast Asia rather than just a small portion or a 'country' in the sense of a 'nation-state'? More specifically, all the regions of contemporary Thailand, Burma, and even Cambodia could have been originally located within the margins of *Suvarṇabhūmi* as a new discovered Pre-Angkorian inscription perhaps suggests (see Addendum). This wise and cautious line of reasoning would thus have the advantage of reconciling the two Thai and Burmese Mon countries and the history of their shared ancestry with the Khmers, despite modern political boundaries.¹⁵⁶

In his study, Aung-Thwin has also highlighted the problem of a western type world view, which was formed in the 19th century and is trapped in national barriers. A nationalism that led to the well-known civilisational catastrophes of the 20th century. The overcoming of rigid patterns of thought in such national categories can certainly also lead to new insights. Especially in historical research with regard to a retrospective view of the past.

or *Nayukon* is actually the Burmese word for black pepper.

¹⁵⁵See, in particular, Map 1 on page 190 of Nicolas Revire's article.

¹⁵⁶Revire, p. 196.

4 Conclusion

The study of the medieval maps in comparison with modern maps has shown that in the Gulf of Thailand are no comparably good topographical similarities to be found as there are in the sea area of today's Myanmar. Also the mainland area of Myanmar, at least as far as the river courses are concerned, offers convincing similarities. Compared to today's maps, especially the chart of Further India in the manuscript Burney MS 111 is quite accurate regarding the coastlines and river bends. The map drawn a few decades later by Nicolaus Germanus, on the other hand, is often more detailed when depicting headlands and river branches at river headwaters. After the review of these maps, more than doubts arise about the old hypothesis that the Kattigara berth in Ptolemy's book should designate today's site of Óc Eo in Vietnam. In contrast, in Ptolemy's naming of settlements, one can very well recognize some Indian name elements, often mixed with names of contemporary villages and towns in Myanmar. Fittingly, Aung-Thwin wrote in relation to the medieval royal city of Pagan of "a combined Indic and indigenous culture that was surely familiar and appreciated by all"¹⁵⁷. In the Greek names of places and regions according to the text versions and maps based on Ptolemy's geographical guide, one can thus also often identify word components of Tibeto-Burman origin. Moreover, a tradition of town names in parts is anything but unusual in European history, too. Even if other ethnic groups and tribes with a different language took possession of these places in history, they often adopted traditional place names, albeit mostly in a modified form. Original names can be clearly recognisable in their modern form, as with the Greek-Celtic Massalia, which is now the French Marseille, or less clearly, as with the Roman Colonia Agrippinensis, which became the German Köln, in English Cologne.

In contrast to Myanmar, cultural influences from the West in the Gulf of Thailand were probably rather modest in the 1st and 2nd centuries CE. Regarding the coastlines, river courses and place names in sum, it can be assumed that the maps depicting the regions east of the Ganges, based on the knowledge of Claudius Ptolemaeus of Alexandria, mainly represent the territory of present-day Myanmar. Of course, this contradicts to a certain extent the myth of the location of the legendary "Golden Land" on the Malay Peninsula. This conclusion also refutes the Western overestimation of the achievements of Roman seafarers in reaching the remotest eastern parts of the world. Even Alexander the Great had to surrender to the unwillingness of his men to fulfil his vision to reach the end of the known world, lying in the East. The soldiers were perhaps more afraid of losing their own habits and culture than of losing their lives. Hardly any different it might have happened to ambitious Roman or Greek merchant captains when shipping eastbound with their crews. There already had to lure very large riches or at least some amenities. For all these reasons, it is extremely unlikely that Western merchants will have gone beyond the territory of today's Myanmar to the east before the time Ptolemy's geography was written down.

Nevertheless, one should not be disappointed, because of Ptolemy's text and the maps drawn on the basis of his studies, the whole of Myanmar, as it was in ancient times, with its old villages, is charted. One has thereby textual and graphic evidence of how far the Roman-Greek and Indian cultures spread out to East Asia, though not to Vietnam and China. Archaeology has also explored the boundaries of this exchange in recent decades. As one might see with this study, however, new insights can also be gained with already existing old sources.

¹⁵⁷Aung-Thwin, p. 306.

Maps

British Library: *Kosmographia Klaudios Ptolemaios* (Manuscript Burney MS 111) at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=burney_ms_111_fs001r# (03/09/2018).

Götzfried Antique Maps: *Claudii Ptolemaei Alexandrini Geographicae Enarrationis, Libri Octo ... Prostant Lugduni apud Hugonem a Porta. M. D. XLI*, Vienne 1541 at <http://www.rare-atlases.com/atlases/16th-century-atlases/1541-ptolemy-s-geographia-by-laurent-fries> (12/08/2018).

Lessman, Thomas A.: <http://www.worldhistorymaps.info/maps.html> (09/26/2018).

National Library of Poland: *Cosmographia Claudius Ptolemaeus* by Germanus, Nicolaus at <https://polona.pl/item/cosmographiaclaudii-ptolomaei-alexandrini-mathematicorum-principis-seculo-seculo,NzQ1NjM4Ng/6/#item> (03/09/2018).

University of Wisconsin: *Leardo Mappamundi* at <https://collections.lib.uwm.edu/digital/collection/agdm/id/538> (10/27/2018).

Unosat: http://unosat-maps.web.cern.ch/unosat-maps/MM/CycloneNargis/UNOSAT_Radarsat_7May2008_Flood_Yangon_Area_highres_v1.pdf (11/17/2018)

U.S. Army Map Service: Maps from first printing in 1959, University of Texas Libraries, 2018 at <https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/ams/burma/> (09/26/2018)

Bibliography

Aung-Thwin, Michael (2005): *The Mists of Rāmañña. The Legend That Was Lower Burma*, Honolulu.

Berliet, Ernelle (2004): *Géographie historique et urbanisation en Birmanie et ses pays voisins, des origines (Ile av. J.-C.) à la fin du XIIIe siècle* [unpublished], Université Lyon II 2004. Interactive version at http://theses.univ-lyon2.fr/documents/lyon2/2004/berliet_e#p=0&a=top (09/12/2018).

Brigitte Borell, Bérénice Bellina, Boonyarit Chaisuwan (2014): “Contacts between the Upper Thai-Malay Peninsula and the Mediterranean World”, In: *Before Siam Was Born: New Insights on the Art and Archaeology of Pre-Modern Thailand and Its Neighbouring Regions*, pp.98-117, Bangkok.

Coderey, Celine (2014): “Healing through Weikza: Therapeutic Cults in the Arakanese Context”, In: *Champions of Buddhism: Weikza Cults in Contemporary Burma*, pp. 164-187, Singapore.

Gerini, G. E. (1909): *Researches on Ptolemy's Geography of Eastern Asia (Further India and Indo-Malay Archipelago)*, London.

Griffiths, Arlo; Bob Hudson, Marc Miyake & Julian Wheatley (2017): "Studies in Pyu Epigraphy, I: state of the field, edition and analysis of the Kan Wet Khaung Gon inscription, and inventory of the corpus", In: *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient* 103, pp. 43-205, Paris.

Gutman Pamela, Hudson Bob (2012): "A First-Century Stele from Sriksetra", In: *Bulletin de l'Ecole française d'Extrême-Orient*, Tome 99, pp. 17-46, Paris.

Guy, John (1997): "A Warrior-Ruler Stele from Śrī Kṣetra, Pyu, Burma", In: *Journal of the Siam Society*, Volume 85, Parts 1 & 2, pp. 85-94, Bangkok.

Horsburgh, James (1841): *The India Directory, Or, Directions for Sailing to and from the East*, Vol. 1, London.

Hudson, Bob (2004): *The Origins of Bagan. The archaeological landscape of Upper Burma to AD 1300*, Sydney.

Kraas, Frauke and Spohner, Regine and Myint, Aye Aye (2017): *Socio-Economic Atlas of Myanmar*, Stuttgart.

Majumdar, R. C. (1944): *Hindu Colonies in the Far East*, Calcutta.

Mannert, Konrad (1797): *Geographie der Griechen und Römer. Fünfter Theil. Indien, und die Per-sische Monarchie bis zum Euphrat*, Nürnberg.

McCrindle, John Watson (1885): *Ancient India as Described by Ptolemy*, London.

Miles, James and Miyake, Marc and Hill, Nathan W. (2018): "The use of Reflectance Transformation Imaging in the recording and analyses of Burmese Pyu inscriptions." In: *Archaeological Research in Asia*, 16. pp. 130-138, Amsterdam.

Moore, Elizabeth & Pauk, Pauk (2001): "Nyaung-gan: A Preliminary Note on a Bronze Age Cemetery near Mandalay, Myanmar (Burma)", In: *Asian Perspectives: Journal of Archaeology & the Pacific*, 40 (1). pp. 35-47, Honolulu.

Moore, Elizabeth (June 2011): "Dawei Buddhist culture: a hybrid borderland", In: *Myanmar Historical Research Journal* (21), pp. 1-62, Yangon.

Moore, Elizabeth (2011): "The Early Buddhist Archaeology of Myanmar: Tagaung, Thagara, and the Mon-Pyu dichotomy." In: *The Mon over Two Millennia: Monuments, Manuscripts, Movements*, pp. 7-23, Bangkok.

Moore, Elizabeth and Win, San (2014): "'Sampanago: 'city of serpents' and the first Muttama (Martaban).'" In: *Before Siam was Born: New Insights on the Art and Archaeology of Pre-Modern Thailand and its Neighbouring Regions*, pp. 216-237, Bangkok.

Naing, Ko Ko (2010): *Buddhism in the Late Konbaung period (1819-1885)*, PhD Dissertation, Mandalay.

Phayre, Arthur Purves (1883): *History of Burma: Including Burma Proper, Pegu, Taungu, Tenasserim, and Arakan : From the Earliest Time to the end of the First war With British India*, London.

Ptolemaios, Klaudios (2006): *Handbuch der Geographie: 1. Teilband: Einleitung und Buch 1-4*, edited by Alfred Stückelberger and Gerd Grasshoff, Basel.

Ptolemaios, Klaudios (2006): *Handbuch der Geographie: 2. Teilband: Buch 5-8 und Indices*, edited by Alfred Stückelberger and Gerd Grasshoff, Basel.

Rajendran, C. P. and Rajendran, Kusala and Andrade, Vanessa and Srinivasalu, S. (2013): "Ages and relative sizes of pre-2004 tsunamis in the Bay of Bengal inferred from geologic evidence in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands" In: *Journal of Geophysical Research: Solid Earth*, Vol.118, pp. 1345-1362. Online at <https://agupubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/jgrb.50122> (09/24/2018).

Revire, Nicolas (2011): "Facts and Fiction: The Myth of Suvannabhūmi through the Thai and Burmese Looking Glass," In: *Mahachulalongkorn Journal of Buddhist Studies* 4 (2011), pp. 79–114, Bangkok.

Sandhu, K. S. (2006): *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia*, Reprint, Singapore.

Scott, James George (1901): *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan states*, Rangoon.

Smith-Forbes, Charles James Forbes (1882): *Legendary History of Burma and Arakan*, Rangoon.

Stargardt, Janice (2016): "From the Iron Age to early cities at Sri Ksetra and Beikthano, Myanmar", In: *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Volume 47, Issue 3, pp. 341-365, Singapore.

Tin, Pe Maung and Luce, G. H. (1960): *The Glass Palace Chronicle of the Kings of Burma*, translation, Rangoon.

Tydd, W. B. (1912): *Burma Gazetteer Sandoway District Volume A*, Rangoon.

Win, Lei Lei (2015): "A Study on Kyaikkatha: An Early Urban Settlement in Lower Myanmar" In: *Suvannabhūmi – Multi-disciplinary journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 7 No. 1 (June 2015), pp. 157-186, Busan (Korea).

Wright, John Kirtland and Hoen, Albert Berthold (1928): *The Leardo map of the world, 1452 or 1453: in the collections of the American geographical society*, New York.